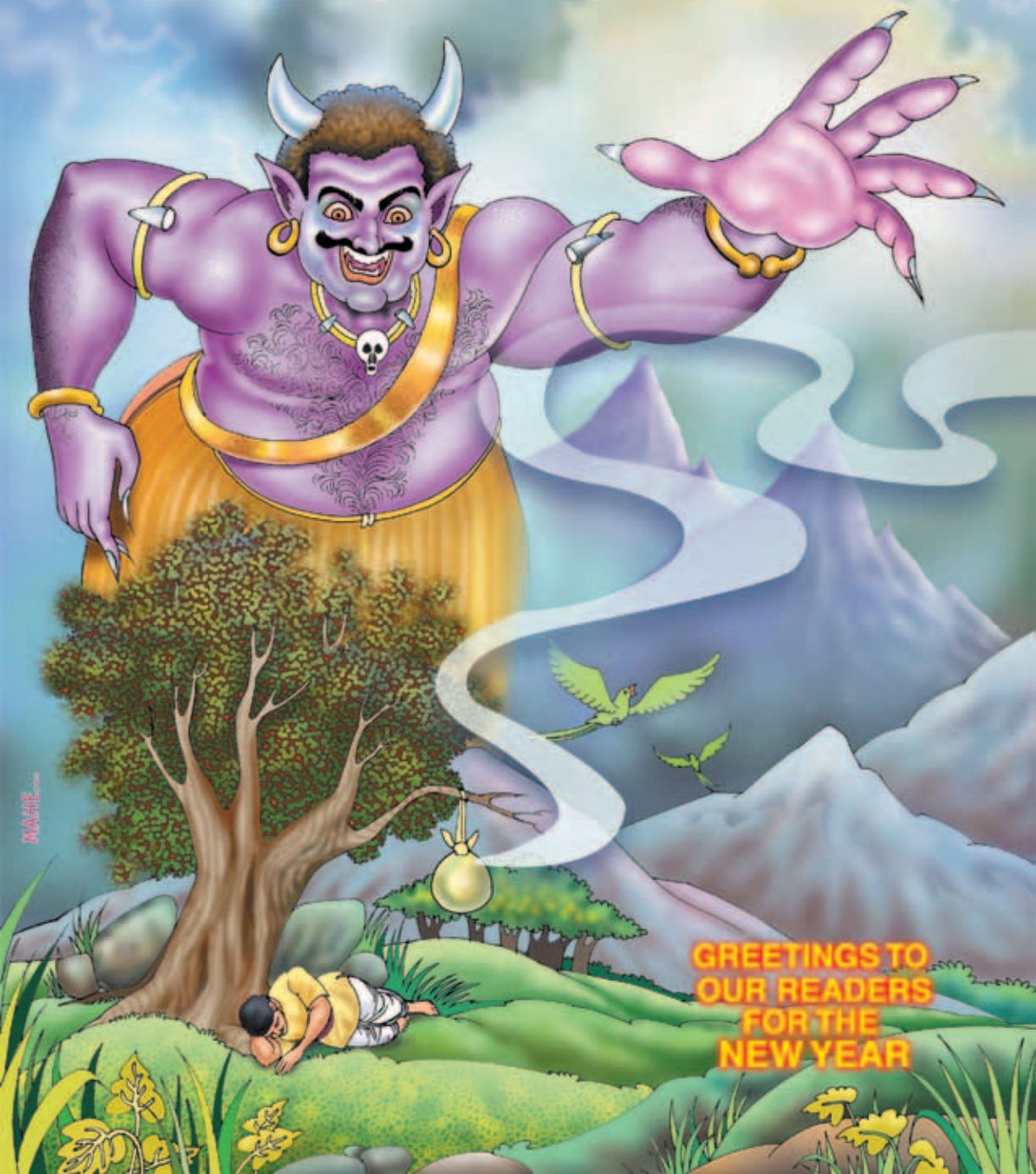


January 2002 - Rs. 10/-



CHANDAMAMA



**GREETINGS TO
OUR READERS
FOR THE
NEW YEAR**

Are you a fan of Garuda, the masked hero
with magical powers?

Enjoy the exciting
exploits of Garuda!



Don't miss the Garuda comics in Chandamama anymore!
Subscribe to Chandamama today!

Chandamama Annual Subscription within India Rs. 120/-
Send your remittances by DD or MO favouring CHANDAMAMA INDIA LIMITED, to
No. 82, Defence Officers Colony, Ekkatuthangal, Chennai - 600 097.
E-mail : subscription@chandamama.org



Saga of India

47



The strange silence

19



The story of Ganesa

25



The three knots

60

CONTENTS

- ★ Make your own destiny ...7
- ★ The perfect marksman ...9
- ★ The fight — by Ruskin Bond ...10
- ★ Happy forever ...16
- ★ Something that can't be stolen ...18
- ★ The strange silence (*New Tales of King Vikram and the Vetala*) ...19
- ★ The story of Ganesa-1 ...25
- ★ News Flash ...30
- ★ Men of wit - Birbal ...32
- ★ Tabla on feet (*Dances of India*) ...34
- ★ Makara Sankranthi (*Festivals of India*) ...36
- ★ Buttermilk and old rice (*A folk tale from Tamil Nadu*) ...40
- ★ Saga of India-24 ...47
- ★ Know your India (*Quiz*) ...50
- ★ Garuda the Invincible-12 (*Comics*) ...51
- ★ Mail Box ...55
- ★ Channamma of Kittur (*Women who made history*) ...56
- ★ The tenth donkey (*A Hodja story*) ...58
- ★ The three knots (*A tale from Latvia*) ...60
- ★ Let us know ...64
- ★ Towards Better English ...65
- ★ Photo caption contest ...66



SUBSCRIPTION

For USA and Canada
Single copy \$2

Annual subscription \$20
Remittances in favour of
Chandmama India Ltd.
to

Subscription Division
CHANDAMAMA INDIA LIMITED
No. 82, Defence Officers Colony
Ekkatuthangal, Chennai - 600 097
E-mail : subscription@chandamama.org

Gift Subscriptions
By Air Mail to all countries
other than India
Twelve issues Rs. 900
Within India Rs. 120
by book post

Send your remittances by Demand
Draft or Money Order favouring
'Chandamama India Limited'

**For booking space in this
magazine please contact :**

Chennai

Ph : 044-234 7384
234 7399

e-mail : advertisements@chandamama.org

Delhi

Mona Bhatia
Ph:011-651 5111/
656 5513/656 5516

Mumbai

Shakeel Mulla
Mobile : 98203 - 02880
Ph : 022-266 1599/
266 1946/265 3057



Founded by

B. Nagi Reddi and Chakrapani

Duties before rights

As we stand at the threshold of year 2002, we are reminded that fifty years ago, we got our first democratically elected government headed by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. This came about two years after we gave unto ourselves a Constitution. On January 26, 1950, India was proclaimed a sovereign democratic republic. The country conducted its first general elections through adult franchise between October 1951 and February 1952.

The Constitution enjoins upon every citizen to uphold and protect the sovereignty, unity, and integrity of the country. This is the bounden duty of all citizens to their motherland, just as they have a duty towards their parents and peers.

The Constitution bestows on the citizens certain fundamental rights, like freedom of speech and expression, freedom to follow a religion of their choice, to pursue any profession, and to carry on any trade or business. A unique feature of our Constitution is that it mentions, along with these rights, the corresponding duties of citizens. Mahatma Gandhi had said, we must perform our duties first before we exercise our rights.

Our country is currently passing through a period of pressures of different kinds from all sides. It is, therefore, only proper that each one of us takes a pledge—as our New Year resolution — to serve our motherland selflessly and strengthen the unity and integrity of our country.

Editor : VISWAM

Editorial Advisors : RUSKIN BOND, MANOJ DAS

Consultant Editor : K. RAMAKRISHNAN

Enter the Heroes of India Quiz and win fabulous prizes

Heroes of India - 4

Modern India too has its heroes- in many fields of activity. Here is a quiz on our modern heroes.

**Three
all correct entries
will receive bicycles
as awards.***



1 He was the first Asian to win the Nobel Prize in literature. His songs inspired many to fight for India's freedom. Do you know who he is?

2 When you think of India's nuclear tests at Pokhran, whose name springs to your mind first? This Bharat Ratna awardee is well-known for research in defence technology. Who is he?

3 We celebrate National Science Day every year on February 28 as a tribute to this Nobel Prize winner. He won the Physics prize in 1928. Can you guess his name?

4 This sitarist has been awarded the honorary knighthood by the Queen of England. You know him, don't you?

5 This heart throb of millions has a temple dedicated to him in Kolkata. He is now the host of a very popular TV game show. Who is he?

Fill in the blanks next to each question legibly. Which of these five is your favourite modern hero and why? Write 10 words on
My favourite modern hero is
.....
.....

Name of participant:.....

Age:.....Class:.....

Address:.....
.....

Pin:.....Ph:.....

Signature of participant:.....

Signature of parent:.....

Please tear off the page and mail it to

Heroes of India Quiz-4

CHANDAMAMA INDIA LIMITED

No.82, Defence Officers Colony

Ekkatuthangal, Chennai - 600 097.

On/before **February 5, 2002**

Instructions

1. The contest is open to children in the age group 8-14 years.
2. *Three winners will be selected for this contest from entries in all the language editions. **Winners will receive bicycles of appropriate size.** If there are more than one all correct entries, winners will be selected on the basis of the best description of **My favourite hero.**
3. The judges' decision will be final.
4. No correspondence will be entertained in this regard.
5. The winners will be intimated by post.

**Prizes brought
to you by**



Make your own destiny

Tumpa and Ratnagiri were neighbouring kingdoms. They were always fighting with each other. But this battle promised to be different: it was to be a battle unto death. Virsen, the general of the army of Tumpa, led his men towards the battlefield. He knew that the enemy outnumbered his army by vast numbers. But he had no option but to fight. To surrender without fighting would mean humiliation for the entire kingdom. And the proud citizens of Tumpa would not like it.

Virsen knew that his soldiers were diffident: they did not believe that they could win. He overheard their demoralised remarks whispered to one another. Their sagging shoulders and drooping faces spoke of their hopelessness.

Virsen realised that he had to do something to boost their confidence.

On the way to the battlefield they came upon an ancient temple. After praying to the goddess enshrined there, Chandamama

Virsen addressed his men: “Most of you here do not think we can win. Let us seek the guidance of the mother-goddess!” He then took out a silver coin and said: “I will now toss this coin. If it lands with the royal seal facing us, then we shall assume that the goddess has signalled our victory. If it falls with the royal seal facing the ground, then that will mean we shall lose. Let destiny reveal itself!”

The soldiers were watching keenly as Virsen tossed the coin. As it landed, the soldiers saw the royal seal gleaming at them. They were overjoyed. The sagging shoulders straightened. They felt confident of winning. With much vigour and enthusiasm, they attacked Ratnagiri and emerged victorious.

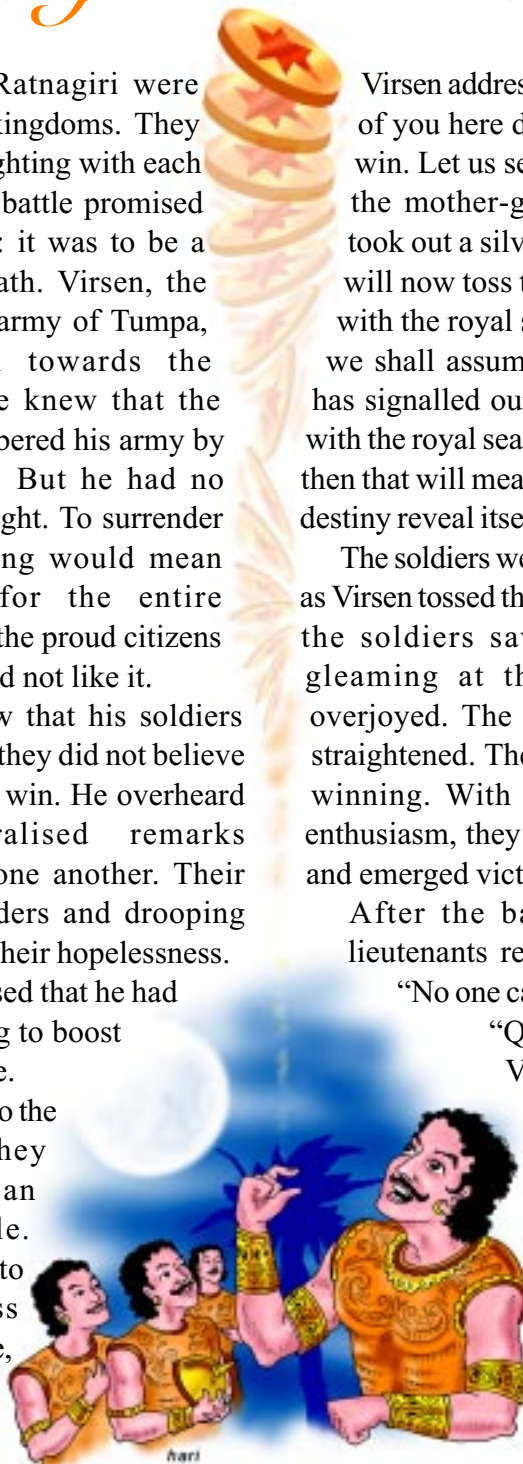
After the battle, one of the lieutenants remarked to Virsen,

“No one can change destiny!”

“Quite right!” replied

Virsen with a curious smile and showed him the coin that he had tossed at the temple – it had the royal seal on both sides!

January 2002





A QUIZ FOR YOU!

Cuttack

A walk through 'the city of thousand years' sounds exciting, doesn't it? A visit to Cuttack in Orissa, which has already celebrated a millennium of existence, will satisfy all interests – avid tourists, shoppers, picnickers, nature-lovers, and the rest!

Cuttack was earlier known as 'Kataka' and was the premier city of Orissa. It has had a chequered history, having been ruled by various dynasties. The ruins of the Barabati Fort, built by the Ganga dynasty, fascinate historians even today.

Setting out on a pilgrimage? Then this city is worth a visit with its numerous

temples and shrines dedicated to various deities. Qadam-i-Rasool is a spot sacred to both Hindus and Muslims. It is believed to house a circular stone carrying the footprints of Prophet Mohammad.

The Ansupa Lake offers vistas of natural beauty. It is visited by many species of migratory birds in winter.

Trekkers and mountaineers! Don't miss the adventures that Ashokajhar offers you. A small island, Dhavaleswar, on river Mahanadi is a beautiful spot for a fun day out.

Cuttack is famous for its filigree and silverware, horn and brass work, and silk and cotton textiles.

A QUIZ FOR YOU!

For children up to 14 years

CONTEST - V

1. Raghurajpur in Puri is famous for a unique type of paintings. Which is this?

2. Which city in Orissa is famous for a Steel Plant?

3. Where in Orissa is the Ushakothi Wildlife Sanctuary situated?

Write your answers legibly in the blank space provided, fill in the coupon below and send the entry to

Orissa Tourism Quiz Contest
Chandamama India Limited
No.82, Defence Officers Colony
Ekkatuthangal, Chennai - 600 097

Name :

Age :

Address:

Pin..... Phone



Winners picked by Orissa Tourism in each contest will be eligible for **3 days, 2-night** stay at any of the **OTDC Panthanivas**, upto a maximum of four members of a family. Only original forms will be entertained. The competition is not open to CIL and Orissa Tourism family members. Orissa Tourism, Paryatan Bhaven, Bhubaneswar-751 014. Ph: (0674) 432177, Fax:(0674)430887, e-mail:ortour@sancharnet.in. Website:Orissa-tourism.com

The perfect marksman

Dhanush was an up and coming archer. His skill with the bow and arrows had fetched him many prizes at contests. These victories went to his head and there came a day when he was convinced that he was the last word in archery.

One day he challenged his guru Aanandji, to a contest.

Aanandji looked at Dhanush keenly. He realised that his student had become an upstart. He needed to be taught a lesson. Guru Aanandji accepted the challenge.

Dhanush set a target for them far, far away. He then took aim. His very first arrow hit the bull's-eye. Then he despatched a second arrow. It split the first arrow into two.

He then turned to his Guru and said triumphantly, "See that! Can you match it, sir?"

Aanandji kept silent. He did not take out his bow immediately. After a brief silence, he asked Dhanush to follow him. Aanandji led Dhanush to some mountains nearby. Both Guru and disciple climbed a peak in silence – all that could be heard was their breath that came out in deep gasps. When they were close to the top of the peak, they stopped. Now they were overlooking a deep gorge between this

peak and another one close by. The gorge was bridged by a flimsy and shaky log.

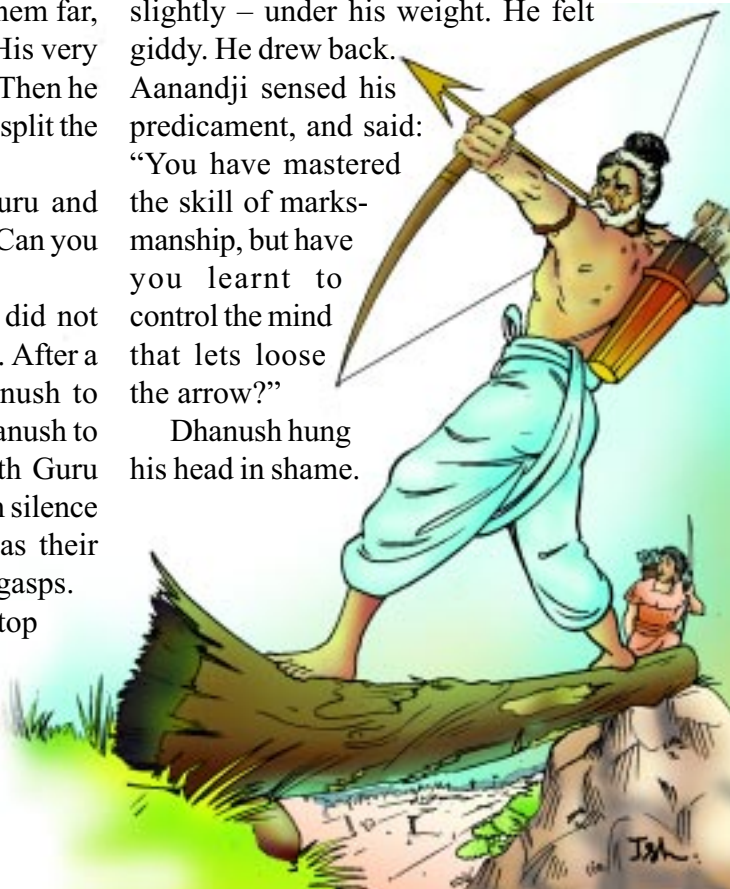
Aanandji then stepped on to the middle of the precarious bridge. He chose a far away tree as his target, drew his bow, and shot an arrow. It found its mark. Stepping back on to safe ground, Aanandji said, "Now it is your turn, my boy."

Dhanush looked down at the gorge in front of him. His head reeled. He felt faint. He took one tentative foot forward on the log. It bent — ever so slightly — under his weight. He felt giddy. He drew back.

Aanandji sensed his predicament, and said:

"You have mastered the skill of marksmanship, but have you learnt to control the mind that lets loose the arrow?"

Dhanush hung his head in shame.



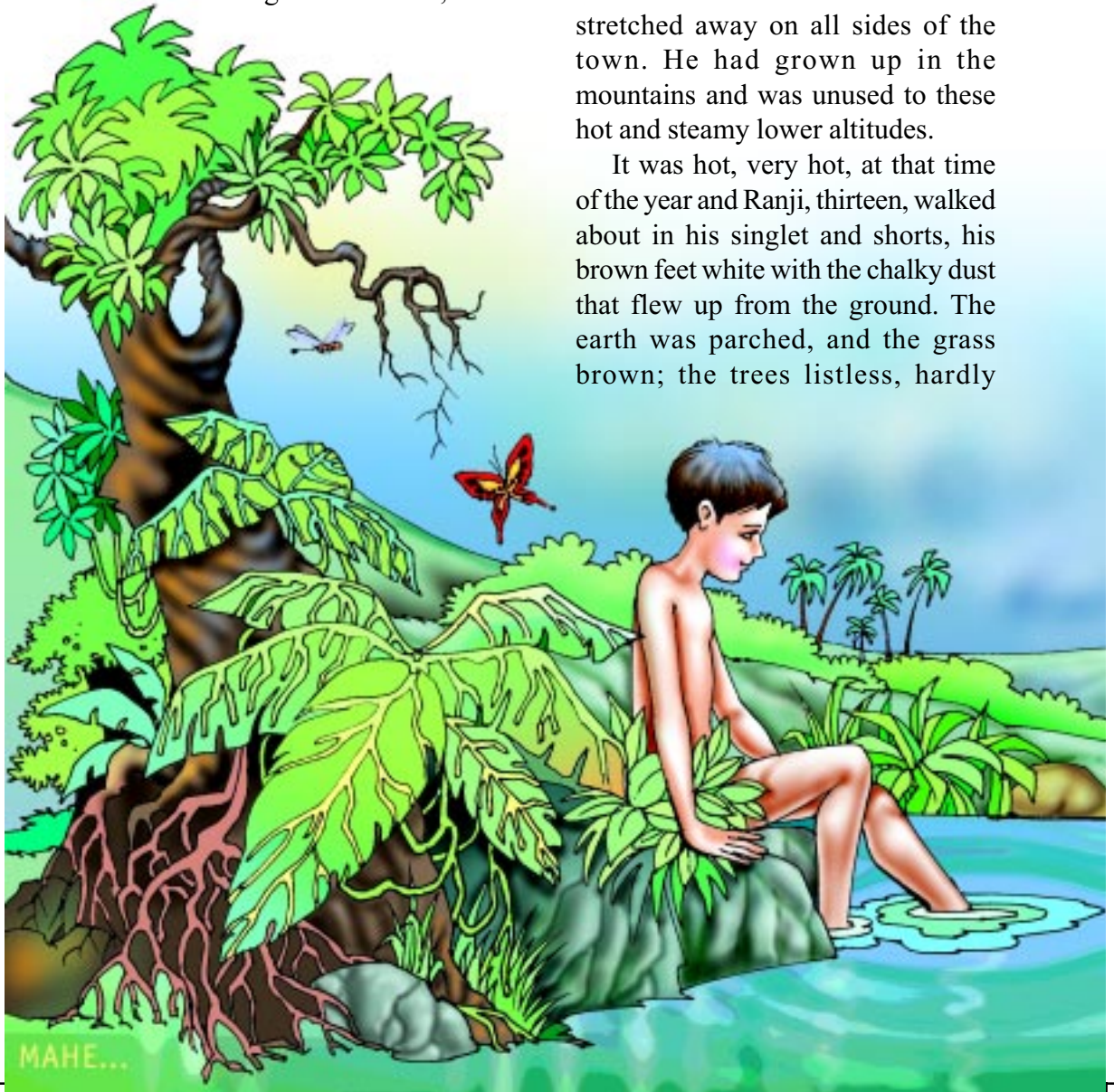
THE FIGHT

By Ruskin Bond

Ranji had been less than a month in the small foothills town when he discovered the pool in the forest. It was the height of summer, and the

school he had newly joined was yet to reopen. He was still without friends and wandered about a good deal by himself into the hills and forests that stretched away on all sides of the town. He had grown up in the mountains and was unused to these hot and steamy lower altitudes.

It was hot, very hot, at that time of the year and Ranji, thirteen, walked about in his singlet and shorts, his brown feet white with the chalky dust that flew up from the ground. The earth was parched, and the grass brown; the trees listless, hardly



stirring, waiting for a cool wind or a refreshing shower of rain. It was on one of those trying days that Ranji found the pool in the forest. The water had a gentle, green translucency, and he could see the smooth, round pebbles at the bottom of the pool. It was fed by a small stream that emerged from a cluster of rocks.

During the monsoon, this stream would be a rushing torrent, cascading down from the hills; but in midsummer, it was barely a trickle. The rocks, however, held the water in the pool, and it did not dry up unlike the pools in the plains.

When Ranji found the pool, he did not hesitate to get into the water. He had often been swimming, on his own or with friends, in the river that ran past his mountain village. There the current had been strong, and one had to be a good swimmer to avoid being swept away. This pool was different — cool and inviting. He threw off his clothes and leapt into the water. He

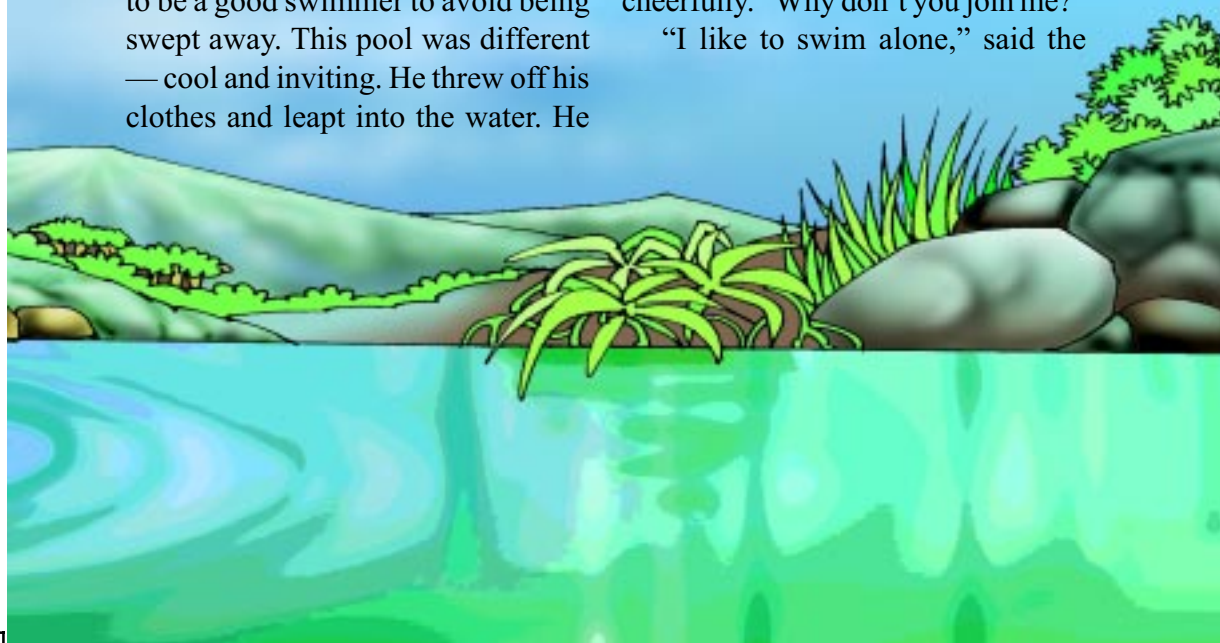
was slim and supple, and he glistened like a golden underwater creature in patches of sunlit water.

He came again the next day, and he was there for almost an hour, sliding in and out of the limpid, green water, or lying stretched out on the smooth, yellow rock, in the shade of the broadleaved forest trees.

It was while he rested on the rock that he noticed another boy standing a little distance away, staring at him in a hostile manner. The boy looked a year or two older than Ranji; he was taller and heavier. He had only just noticed Ranji and he stood at the edge of the pool, in his bathing shorts, as though waiting for an explanation of Ranji's presence. Finally, he called out, "What are *you* doing here, you bag of bones?"

"Swimming," replied Ranji, cheerfully. "Why don't you join me?"

"I like to swim alone," said the



other. "This is my pool. I did not invite you here. And why aren't you wearing any clothes?"

"I don't wear clothes when I am swimming."

"You skinny son of a lizard, put on your clothes!"

"Son of a buffalo, take yours off!"

That was too much for the bigger boy. He strode up to Ranji, who still sat on the rock. Planting his broad feet firmly on the sand, he said (as though it would settle the matter once and for all):

"Don't you know I am a Punjabi? I don't take insults from village boys!"

"So, you like to fight with village boys?" said Ranji. "Well, in my village we learn to fight while still in our cradles. We're Rajputs!"

"I'm a Punjabi!"

"I'm a Rajput!"

They had reached an impasse. One said he was a Punjabi, the other had proclaimed himself a Rajput. There was little more that could be said.

"You *understand* that I'm a

Punjabi?" repeated the stranger, uneasily aware that the other had not seemed sufficiently impressed.

"I've heard you say it three times," replied Ranji.

"Then why don't you run off?"

"I'm waiting for you to run."

"I shall have to thrash you," said the Punjabi boy, assuming a threatening stance.

"Well, let's see how you do it," said Ranji.

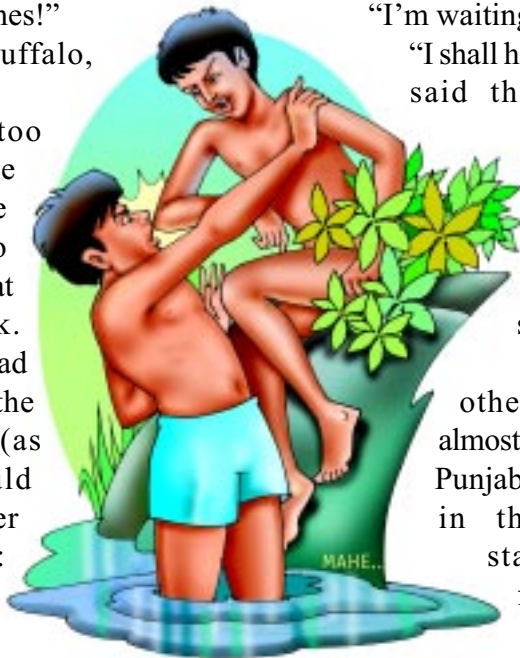
They stared each other in the eye for almost a minute. Then the Punjabi boy struck Ranji in the face. Ranji staggered back, feeling giddy.

"There you are!" exclaimed his assailant. "Will you be off now?"

By way of reply, Ranji swung his arm up and pushed a hard, bony fist against his opponent's nose.

And then they were at each other's throats, swaying together on the rock, tumbling onto the sand, rolling over and over, arms and legs locked in a fierce struggle. In this way they rolled right into the shallows of the pool.

Spluttering and covered with mud, they groped for each other's



heads and throats. But after five minutes of frenzied, unscientific struggle, neither boy had emerged victorious. Panting with exhaustion, they stood back from each other, making great efforts to crown victory with a suitable speech.

“Now, do you realise that I’m a Pubjabi?” gasped the bigger boy.

“Do you now know that I’m a Rajput?” said Ranji, with difficulty.

They gave a moment’s consideration to each other’s declarations. Then the Punjabi boy said, “So, you won’t go away?”

“I’m not going anywhere,” said Ranji.

“Then we shall have to continue the fight.”

“That’s right.”

But neither boy moved or took the initiative.

Then the Punjabi boy had an inspiration.

“We’ll continue the fight tomorrow,” he said. “If you dare to return tomorrow, I’ll give you a real thrashing. I was not at my best today.”

“You’ll be worse tomorrow,” said Ranji. “I’ll be here all right.”

They turned their back on each other, and returning to their respective rocks, dressed and then left the forest by different routes.

When Ranji got home, he found it difficult to account for the cuts and

bruises that showed on his face, arms, and legs. It was obvious that he had been in a fight, and his mother insisted that he stayed at home for the rest of the day.

That evening, though, he slipped out of the house, went to the bazaar, and spent the last of his pocket money on a couple of hot, sweet *jalebis*. He



had just finished eating when he saw his recent adversary coming down the road. He stood his ground and scowled at his opponent. The other boy said nothing either, but scowled back with equal ferocity.

The next day was as hot as the previous one. Ranji felt weak and lazy

and not at all eager for a fight. His body was stiff and sore after the previous encounter; but he could not refuse the challenge. He must face up to his enemy, outwit him if possible. To surrender would be to forfeit all rights to the pool in the forest, and he had no intention of giving it up.

When he reached the pool, he found the other boy sitting at the far end, showing off by heaving large rocks into the water. When he saw Ranji, he shouted, "Come over on this side and fight!"

But Ranji had decided to make his own conditions.

"Come *this side* and fight," he shouted back.

"Swim over and fight me here!" called the other. "It seems you cannot swim the length of this pool!"

Ranji could have swum the length of the pool a dozen times. Removing his outer garments, he dived straight into the water, cutting through it like a long, golden fish, and surfacing with hardly a splash. The other boy's jaw hung loose in amazement.

"You can dive!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, that's easy," said Ranji, treading water and waiting for another challenge. "Can't you dive?"

"No," said the other. "I jump straight in. But if you will show me how, I'll make a dive."

"It's easy," said Ranji. "Stand

straight on the rock, hold your arms out and allow your head to displace your feet!"

The heavier boy stood up, stiff and straight, stretched out his arms, and threw himself at the water. He landed flat on his belly with a crash that sent the birds screaming out of the trees.

Ranji burst into a laughter.

"Are you trying to empty the pool," he called, as the other came to the surface, spouting water like a small whale.

"Wasn't it good?" asked the boy, evidently proud of his feat.

"Not very good," said Ranji. "You should have more practice. See, I'll do it again."

And pulling himself up on a rock, Ranji executed another perfect dive. The other boy waited for him to come up; but, swimming under water, in a world of soft lights and crooked sunshine, Ranji circled the pool and came up from behind his opponent.

"How did you do that?" asked the boy.

"Can't you swim under water?" asked Ranji.

"I don't know. Let's see..."



He made a tremendous effort to plunge to the bottom of the pool; indeed, he thought he had gone right down, though his bottom, like a duck's, remained above the surface.

Ranji, however, did not want to sound too discouraging. He really wanted to help.

"Not bad," he said. "But you need a lot of practice."

"Will you teach me?" asked his foe.

"If I have the time, I might teach you," said Ranji.

"You'd better teach me or I'll thrash you," said the other aggressively, but then changed to a more humble tone. "Will you come here every day and teach me?"

"I'll try," said Ranji. They had pulled themselves out of the water and were sitting side by side on a smooth rock.

"My name is Vijay," said the bigger boy. "What's yours?"

"Ranji."

"I'm strong, am I not?" said Vijay, bending his arm so that a ball of muscle stood up.

"You're quite strong," admitted Ranji. "You should become a wrestler."

"I'll become Mister Universe," said Vijay, thumping his chest. He looked critically at Ranji's thin but hard body.

"You're quite strong yourself," he conceded. "You're too bony. You hill people don't eat enough. You must come and have a meal with me one day. I drink one litre of milk every day. We have our own cow! Teach me to swim and I'll give you milk with almonds."

"Agreed," said Ranji.

Vijay put his arm around Ranji and said, "We're friends now, yes?"

"We're friends," said Ranji.

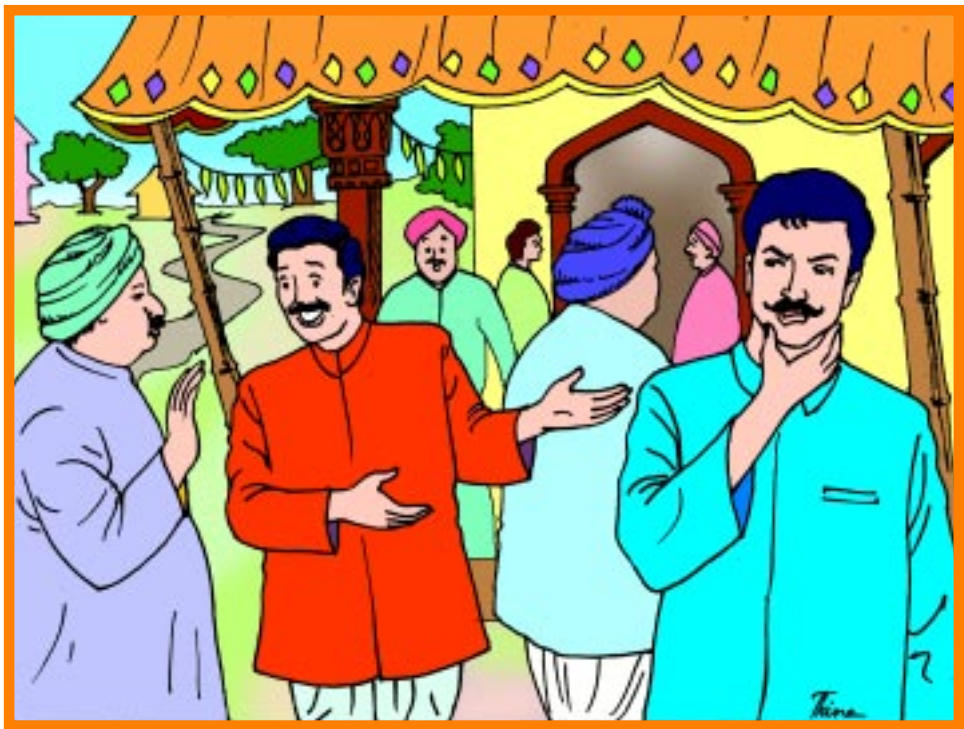
The birds had settled again in the branches of the forest trees, and the pool was still and limpid in the afternoon shadows.

"It's *our* pool," declared Vijay. "Nobody else will come here. Who would dare?"

"Yes, who would dare?" said Ranji, smiling in the knowledge that victory was really his.

January 2002





HAPPY FOREVER

*R*am and Bhim were neighbours. While Ram always appeared happy and satisfied, Bhim went around looking discontented and unhappy.

Ram possessed four acres of fertile agricultural land, and Bhim thought that this was the reason for Ram's happiness. And so, Bhim, who wanted to be as happy as Ram, worked hard, day and night, and with the money he earned, he, too, bought five acres of land. And yet Ram looked happier than he felt.

A few days later, Ram got married.

His wife was a real peach of a woman. Lovely, gentle, and simply wonderful.

Bhim was now quite convinced. 'Hmm.. m,' he thought, 'so this is what makes Ram look pleased as punch. Let me go and marry, too.' So he searched high and low and finally found a girl who, he thought, would be a perfect wife. But why did he still feel discontented? There was something niggling him somewhere deep within. What was it?

Ram built a two-storey house for himself. Bhim outdid him by building

a three-storeyed house. If Ram invited ten guests for lunch, Bhim would invite twenty friends to dinner. But, however much he outdid Ram, poor Bhim never could match his contented looks.

One day, a sadhu came to the village. Ram invited him home and paid due respects to him. The sadhu was impressed and said: "My son! Ask for whatever you want and I shall grant it!"

"By god's grace, swami, I'm healthy and have a happy family. Please bless me that I always remain happy in my life," said Ram most humbly.

"It's rare to see a contented man like you. God will always bless you and your family!" said the sadhu before he went away.

Of course, Bhim too invited him home and entertained him more lavishly than Ram had done. Well, the sadhu asked him: "What would you like to have?"

Bhim unashamedly said: "I'd like to be happier and more successful than my neighbour, Ram."

The sadhu thought for a while. "I can grant you that, but only with Ram's consent!" said the sadhu.

Bhim was flabbergasted as he feared Ram would never agree to such

a suggestion. But the sadhu insisted on calling Ram over. Ram came readily. As soon as he listened to Bhim's desire, he agreed wholeheartedly. The sadhu asked: "Most people want to do better than the others they know. But here you concede that Bhim may find more happiness than you. But why?"

Ram answered: "O noble sir, if I am happier or more successful than



others, they feel jealous of me and even hate me. This disturbs and hurts me. But if my neighbours are more successful and happier than I am, they will no longer detest me. Who knows, they may even forget me. Those who wish others to be successful will always be happier than those who pray for their happiness alone."

Bhim had by now learnt his lesson. Very soon, he too started looking happy and contented.

Something that can't be stolen

Dheeramarthand was the King of Dheerpuri. After his passing away, Prince Veerasimha ascended the throne. At that time he was quite young and, like every young man, he was more interested in fun and frolic. Fortunately, the ministers of Dheerpuri were loyal and efficient. So, he would entrust the administration in their hands, and often spend his time a-hunting. In fact, he would go into the forest with his men and not return for days together.

One day, Veerasimha was on his way back to the capital. Suddenly, he decided that he should spend a day more away from the palace. As he passed through a village, the people gave him a rousing reception. A wealthy landlord of the place invited him to spend a night at his residence, where he extended all comforts befitting his royal guest.

After dinner, during their conversation, the king asked of his host: "How old would you be?"

"Oh! I really don't know, your highness," replied the landlord, smiling. "Could be sixty or seventy."

"That's a pretty old age," remarked Veerasimha. "You must be careful!"

"Your highness," said the landlord, "I possess a few acres of farm land; also some jewellery and money. I'm always on my guard, lest all that wealth gets stolen. But, my consolation is, nobody can rob me of my age! So, I'm the least bothered. That's why I don't keep track of my age!"





New tales of
King Vikram
and the Vetala

The Strange Silence

*I*t was a terrible night. The rain came down in torrents and thunder rumbled threateningly. The frequent flashes of lightning revealed the ugly vistas of grinning ghouls. King Vikram tripped over the gnarled, knotty roots of the ancient tree as he reached for the corpse that dangled from its branches. He put the corpse on his shoulder and started walking back. He had a rendezvous to keep with the strange mendicant.



“What makes you so determined to carry me away from here?” asked the Vetala who possessed the corpse. But King Vikram kept silent. “Your silence is enigmatic, rather like King Sushanta’s!” commented the Vetala. “Have you heard of him? Let me regale you with his story to make your journey easier!” And he narrated this story:

King Sushanta of Pushpanagar was wise and noble. He gave alms to holy men and gifts to deserving artists and poets. He made sure that his subjects were happy and that his kingdom was prosperous. If he had a fault, it was anger. He would fly into a rage if something did not happen as he wanted it to. Once when the royal cooks

messed up a special dish that the king had ordered for some very special guests, they not only lost their jobs but were also sent out of the kingdom immediately.

If an officer was found to be guilty of some lapse in duty, he invited the king’s wrath. Not only would he lose his job, but his life. The king’s reputation of being an angry man made sure that the people lived in uneasy calm.

One day a holy man appeared in his court, and said that he wanted the king’s permission to hold discourses at the temples in the kingdom.

“Who are you, O noble one? Where are you from?” asked the king courteously.

“I’m Pranananda. I’ve just come here from the Himalayas where I was meditating for the last decade,” replied the saintly man. “Meditation had brought me peace of mind. But my guru said the purpose of my life should be not only to seek salvation for myself, but to show the path to other less fortunate men and women. That is what has brought me here!”

King Sushanta was impressed. “Swamiji! We shall be grateful if you’ll settle down here and guide me and my subjects,” he said.

The saint laughed. “O King, I’ve decided not to settle down in any place. But your affection and kindness ties me to your kingdom. I shall stay here for

some days and try to make myself useful to your people!”

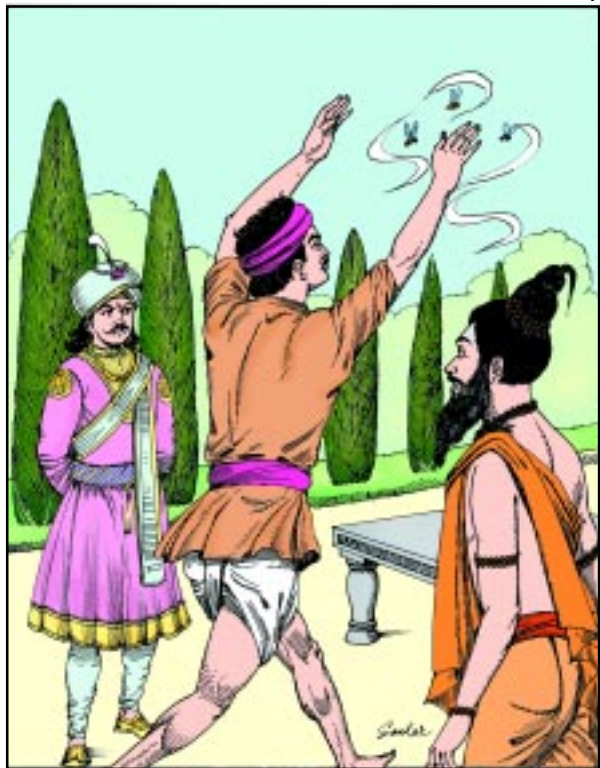
The king ordered a cottage to be built for the swamiji in the royal park. He called the park keeper, Sumangala, and asked him to look after the swamiji’s comforts.

Soon Sumangala and the swamiji became great friends. Sumangala lived with his wife and two sons in a cottage in the park. Every morning, after prayers, Prananda would spend a couple of hours with the king. Sushanta listened earnestly to swamiji’s discourses and tried to act according to his wise advice. Swamiji would then go around, addressing people gathered at the temples.

At night, he would have dinner with Sumangala, who lived in a cottage in the park with his wife and two sons. The swamiji would tell wonderful stories to the two boys into the night.

One day, when the king and the swamiji were at the park, Sumangala was trimming a bush nearby. He noticed that some bees were bothering the swamiji. He rushed to him, waving his hands to keep the bees away.

But the king did not like the way Sumangala had interrupted the conversation. “How dare you jump between us like that?” he shouted. “Who asked you to interfere? Had the bees got intolerable, wouldn’t I have helped swamiji? Get out of my sight! I Chandamama

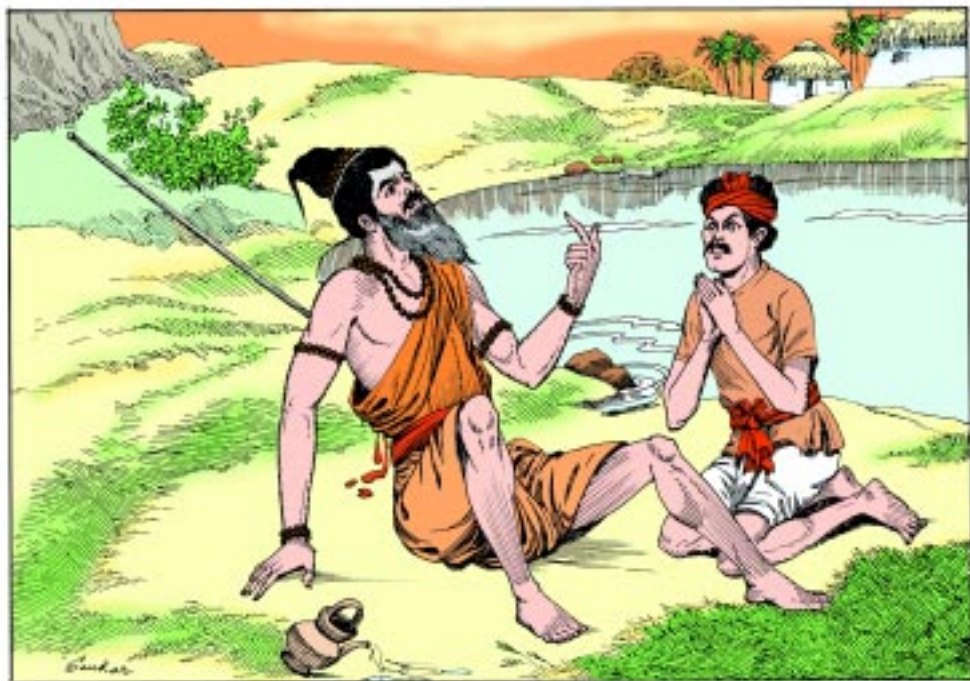


don’t want to see you here again!” he shouted.

Sumangala was stunned. But swamiji went to his rescue. “Don’t shout at him, my son,” he urged the king. “After all, his intention was good. It is easy to get angry. But decisions taken in a moment of anger will prove to be wrong. When you are angry, the best course is to be silent till you feel that you are once again your old reasonable self. If in a fit of anger you send away Sumangala, you might not easily find another capable and honest man to replace him.”

King Sushanta accepted his advice and pardoned Sumangala.

Prananda’s words of wisdom had a tremendous impact on the king. A few



months later, however, the swamiji became very restless. One day, he told the king: “My goal in life is to help as many people as I can, and not just the citizens of your kingdom. I would like to travel to other lands and guide many people.”

But the king would not hear of his going away. Then swamiji relented and said he would return to Pushpanagar every third month and spend a month with the king. King Sushanta had to accept this.

Three months passed. One evening Pranandana came back to Pushpanagar and went to his cottage. Sumangala did not notice his arrival. It was now dark and swamiji was thirsty. He went to the pond in the park to fill his jug with water.

As he dipped his jug into the pond to fill it, it made a loud gurgling sound.

Sumangala, whose cottage was nearby, heard the noise. He thought some animals had entered the garden and were at the pond. He rushed out and threw his spear in the direction of the pond.

Alas! The spear pierced swamiji and he cried aloud. Sumangala recognised his voice and ran out in horror. He found swamiji gasping for breath. He fell at his feet and begged his pardon. The swamiji said, “Remove the spear from my back so that I can die in peace.” Sobbing, Sumangala did as he was told and gently laid him on the ground.

“Forgive me,” he sobbed. “I did not mean to do it.”

Swamiji smiled: "I know it. I forgive you." And he breathed his last.

Suddenly, Sumangala was struck with fear. 'What would happen to me and my family if the king were to hear of this?' he wondered. He rushed to his cottage, told the whole story to his wife, and along with their two young children, they disappeared into the night.

The next day the guards discovered the swamiji's body in the park. They searched for Sumangala but could not find him anywhere. They concluded that he must have killed the swamiji for some reason. They took the news to the king. King Sushanta was furious. He ordered a manhunt, but Sumangala could not be traced.

Meanwhile Sumangala had taken up a job in a neighbouring kingdom. But he was not happy. He wanted to return to Pushpanagar. When one year had passed, he ventured into Pushpanagar and met an old friend, a courtier in the palace. He requested him to find out if the king had forgiven him for the swamiji's death.

The courtier found an opportunity to broach the subject with the king. The royal gardener was asking the king for some implements. The courtier intervened: "Sumangala was a wonderful gardener! He did not spend so much on implements."

But the king did not say a word. The courtier told Sumangala to stay away. Chandamama



Six months later, at Sumangala's request, the courtier took up his cause. This time, too, the king remained silent.

Another six months passed. Sumangala was now quite desperate. This time he risked his life and went to Pushpanagar with his family. Instead of going to his friend, he presented himself at the court and fell at the feet of the king. He narrated the whole story of the swamiji's untimely death.

"I know it all, Sumangala. I know you could not have done it intentionally. Come back and join my service once again!" said the king.

Here Vetala stopped his narration and turned to the king. "O king, when Sumangala's friend sang the park-keeper's praises in the court for the first

two times, the king would not react at all. But when Sumangala himself went and fell at the king's feet two years after the accidental death of swamiji, the king took him back. Doesn't this show the king to be inconsistent in his behaviour? Do you think that only when he saw Sumangala he realised that he couldn't have killed the swamiji deliberately? If you know the answers to these questions, but choose to remain silent, your head will split into a thousand pieces!"

King Vikram replied promptly: "No, King Sushanta was not inconsistent in his behaviour. And he must have realized long back that the swamiji's death had been accidental, and not deliberate, for didn't you say that he was a wise ruler? Surely he knew his park-keeper well! If he had ordered a manhunt for Sumangala, it was because he was blinded by anger at the thought of the untimely and violent death of swamiji, whom he revered very much. We know

that anger was the king's greatest weakness. Swamiji had once advised him not to do anything when he was angry, but to wait till he was his old reasonable self. The king was still angry at the park-keeper when the courtier pleaded on his behalf. But he remembered his mentor's words and remained silent, perhaps because he was afraid that he might, in a fit of rage, harm Sumangala if he were to present himself before him. Two years after the incident, the wound had healed by the time Sumangala made his desperate appearance in the court. And the king reacted in a reasonable way. The king was only following the wise words of his mentor when he held his tongue and let time heal his anger before he felt able to talk rationally to Sumangala."

No sooner had King Vikram answered than the Vetala once again gave him the slip and glided back to the ancient tree. And King Vikram drew his sword and followed the Vetala.





The Story of Ganesa

Long, long ago, at a time which nobody can visualise, Lord Brahma sat on a lotus in Satya Loka. He was busy at Creation, and after some time, he felt tired and yawned. His yawn triggered the mountain peaks to crack and tumble down. Fire erupted from the cracks and the flames leaped to great heights. As sleep overcame him, his eyes welled, and the tears came down in torrents causing great floods. When Brahma closed his eyes, the universe was enveloped in darkness. It was night.

Soon it was time for the day to break. The universe was slowly lit with brightness. The Lord's consort, Devi Saraswati, took up her veena and played the raga *Bhoopalam*. The music that emanated from the veena awoke Brahma and he got up. His four faces

looked in the four directions - north, south, east, and west.

The Lord saw that the floods below had risen to a great height. He saw a streak of bright light amidst the layers of waves rising from the waters, and it was moving. Floating on the waters was a big banyan leaf, and on it lay a baby as bright as the full moon. The infant was sucking its thumb. As the leaf came closer, he noticed that the infant had a head like that of the elephant. The trunk was playing with the toes. Its face was brilliantly lit. Brahma looked at its four hands with fascination. As he was looking at the infant with great intent, the leaf disappeared along with the infant on it. Water receded from the place where the leaf disappeared. It was surrounded by oceans and seas. It was the earth.

1. The advent of an incarnation



The Lord began his activity of creation again. As mountains arose, he sprinkled water from his *kamandalu* on them. The water took spring and flowed down as rivers. Soon trees and plants took roots on the earth which was then endowed with rich elements like gems and gold. Brahma created animals and birds, insects and reptiles to live on the earth, and gifted the seas and oceans with fishes of innumerable varieties. Once again he poured water from his jug and mixed it with clay. Lo and behold, the shape he gave to it was that of a man. Yet another shape, and it was that of a woman.

All this while, Saraswati was playing on the veena. Suddenly, the divine

instrument struck a discordant note, and the Devi wondered what would have happened. She looked at her lord and saw that Brahma's faces had suddenly turned pale. He rose from the lotus and looked down on the earth. His eight eyes met with some strange sights. He was perplexed to see that everything had turned topsy-turvy.

The mountain-peaks had dived into the earth and the base of the mountains shielded the sun from shining on the earth. Trees stood upside down with the roots protruding out into the sky. The birds were flying backwards, and the fishes stood stock-still in the seas and oceans. The animals suddenly changed their size and shape. They appeared grotesque as some of them were without head, some sans limbs or eyes or nose, and some of them had their tail attached to their face!

Brahma was horrified. Now this was not how he had imagined and created them. With trepidation his eyes turned to the human beings. Some of them had two heads - one of a male and the other female. Some men had stunted legs, while some women's legs were as long as tall trees. Some men had their heads facing backwards. Some others had four legs, while some others went about hopping on single legs. Some men had no head on their shoulders. All these

living beings - humans, animals, birds, and others - were crying, weeping, howling, or shouting as if they were finding fault with their Creator. “O Lord Brahma! You have four heads, but none of them seems to be all right! Otherwise, how could you make all of us so ugly looking?”

The Lord felt that his head was reeling. He thought his eyes were getting blinded with darkness. He looked at Saraswati with some fear. Would she also appear ugly? Brahma asked aloud: “Why and how have my creations turned so distorted? I had conceived their shape and size, colour and character, and had created them accordingly. I can’t believe these inexplicable changes!”

Brahma spoke so loudly that his words echoed from all corners of the universe. As he looked around, he once again saw a streak of light coming towards him. It was from a figure which had an elephant-head, and four hands which held a string of rope, a pot, an axe, and a goad. The face was as bright as the moon. The brilliance had spread up to the skies.

Saraswati was then playing Aum (*omkaram*), the supreme sound, which reverberated all over the universe. As she saw the brilliant figure, her fingers spontaneously strummed a hymn of Chandamama



salutation to the elephant-headed figure. Later, she played several ragas, *Hamsadhwani* last of all.

The elephant-headed figure blessed Brahma, who now acquired a lustrous aura around him. Brahma’s hands folded automatically into a *namaskar*. He paid obeisance to the figure and said: “O Benevolent One, may I know who you are. Please forgive me, for, I am not able to recognise you. Kindly shower your blessings on me!”

“My son, Brahma deva!” said the figure affectionately. “You may conceive many things, and resolve to do many things but all of them may not happen, because there could be obstacles. I am the one who removes obstacles to help



fruition of whatever one imagines or desires to happen. I am, therefore, called **Vighneswara** or Remover of obstacles. I am the master of what are known as Panchabhootas or five *ganas*, who are the attendants of Siva. Therefore, I am also known as **Ganapati**. I can control and rein in even mighty destroyers like the mad elephants that trample over ripe fields and grasslands. You may call me Vighneswara in future.”

Brahma now requested that he be told why all that he had created from his imagination had suddenly become distorted. “Please tell me how my creations can be perfect,” he requested.

“That was to teach you about

obstacles,” said Vighneswara. “When I first appeared to you as an infant on a leaf, you did not understand the significance of the vision that you saw. And so you did not care to think of me, the Remover of obstacles. It did not occur to you to pray to me. If you want to remove obstacles, you must first offer prayers to me. As I told you, I control and check all hurdles. If anyone prays to me before attempting any activity, then that activity will proceed smooth.

“Do you know what it means to be thinking of me before commencing on a task? It only means that you must launch into a task with your eyes fully open. That you must know the obstacles you are likely to face on your way, of the hurdles that you may be called upon to cross.

“When I say pray to me before you start a new venture, I actually mean that you should go into your venture fully aware of the pitfalls and the problems that you are likely to face. I am nothing but the personification of that knowledge of obstructions and difficulties.

“Whoever starts a new task, be it Brahma himself or a mere man, it is important that he knows the full extent of his work, the risks and responsibilities that go along with it. Only one who is forewarned and forearmed can even dream of success.

“The elephant tests the strength of the ground with its trunk before moving forward. Among the animals, the elephant is the largest and the most intelligent. It is vital to be as intelligent as an elephant and it is to indicate this that I have assumed the head of an elephant. As I am elephant-headed, I am also known as **Gajanaana**.

“While you were asleep, a demon called Somakasura had stolen the four Vedas and hidden them somewhere in the ocean. Lord Vishnu then incarnated as a fish and killed the demon and retrieved the Vedas, and gave them to me. After I hand them to you, you will not face any obstacles to your activity.”

Lord Brahma gratefully accepted the four vedas that were handed to him by the elephant-headed god. He began singing in praise of Vighneswara, and promised that he would offer prayers to him before he started his activity. “Please bless me so that my task proceeds smoothly.”

Vighneswara turned to Brahma, saying, “Here, I take back all your creations till now. Creation is an art, and should not be made a degrading activity. You must make the universe a creation of beauty. I am born as the son of Siva and Parvati and have incarnated as Ganapati, lord of all ganas, **Vinayaka** as one without a peer, and as Vighneswara, to save your creations from obstacles, protect them, and accept their prayers.”

After blessing Brahma, the elephant-headed figure disappeared. At that time, Saraswati was playing raga *Hindolam*. The sky was lit with a bright light. Lord Brahma once again started creation after chanting “*Aum Vighneswaraya namaha!*” His chanting was heard all over the universe. All that he created now were perfect in shape and size, and looked beautiful. After seeing the creations, Saraswati was inspired to play different ragas.

(To continue)



NEWS FLASH

Stars and trees

The Hindu almanac has twenty-seven 'stars', starting with Aswati and ending with Revathi. Every Hindu is supposed to have been born under one star or the other. Each of these 27 stars has a flower, animal, bird, and a tree associated with it. The Vedic India Society of Coimbatore, in Tamilnadu, chose a school in nearby Mettupalayam en route to Ootacamund or Udhagamandalam and prompted its students to plant saplings of trees associated with their respective birth-star. The students took a pledge to look after the saplings till they leave the school. The Vedic India Society now proposes to spread the message of 'star forests' to all schools in the country.



For a good wash

Sylvester is a 3-month-old cat. The pet's owner in her Copenhagen flat did not notice that he had jumped into the washing machine. Her attention was drawn only when she heard his screams. The water was piping hot, and she could not open the machine because she had set it on the timer. When ultimately, he was pulled out, he was dizzy and had turned blue due to lack of oxygen in the machine. He was rushed to a veterinary clinic where he recovered in a few days' time. He was brought back home. Wouldn't you like to know what he did? He found the washing machine open, and just jumped into it, probably for a good wash!



Lightning-proof

The city-state of Singapore takes great care of its trees. Not long ago, it was discovered that on an average, at least ten trees are struck by lightning every year. While two or three of them die instantly, the others suffer damage, exposing themselves to fungus-attacks. They are then destroyed so that the trees growing nearby are not affected. The civic authorities have now decided to protect the trees by installing lightning conductors on them. The copper conductors, which will receive the lightning bolt, will take it straight to the ground, and the tree will be saved. Each conductor costs some 3,000 U.S. dollars. Nearly a hundred trees taller than 30 metres have been identified for such protection. An exercise worth emulation!



Samson and Delilah



Chandamama

They are — no, not the names mentioned in the Old Testament - but two dogs of Van Nuys, in Los Angeles. The names were given to them by one of the residents, 58-year-old Barbara Fiero, who chanced upon them under strange circumstances. A Lap dog, apparently blind, was being guided by a German Shepherd to get on to foot-paths, stop at signals, and to cross the roads. She watched them for a few days and found that they were always together. She was amazed at their behaviour and surprised to see implicit obedience in the smaller dog whenever the bigger dog nudged her or gave an affectionate kick on the leg to say 'halt'. The kind-hearted lady guessed that they were homeless and she took them home, and called them after the Biblical romantic pair.

31

January 2002

Men of Wit - Birbal



Emperor Akbar was holding court one day. A courtier went forward, salaamed the emperor thrice, and said: "A new variety of attar has come from Isfahan. Would Shahenshah be gracious enough to give his opinion?" He placed a tiny vial on the emperor's extended palm.

Akbar opened the vial and smelled the content. A smile came to his face. He looked at his courtiers. "You've all seen me receive this bottle from Mir Shamsuddin. Can any of you tell me when the hand of the giver is below that of the receiver?" He awaited an answer.



Shamsuddin looked perplexed. Did he do anything wrong by placing the vial on the emperor's palm? He looked at the emperor's palm. He was about to say something, but he saw the emperor waving his hand. "Do you have an answer?"

There was a murmur among the courtiers. True, Akbar was fond of posing puzzling questions to courtiers. Today's question baffled them. Shamsuddin returned to his seat.





Another courtier stood up. "Does it matter, Shahenshah, whether one palm is above or below the other?" Once again a smile arose on the emperor's face.

Akbar looked around as if he was searching for a face. "So none of you knows the answer? Where's Birbal?" he asked. Every pair of eyes searched for Akbar's favourite courtier.



"Here I am, Shahenshah!" The courtiers turned their eyes to the carpeted pathway. "Birbal!" the emperor greeted him. "You've come just in time to clear one of my doubts." The emperor then repeated his question.

Birbal took a look at the courtiers and went up to the emperor. He pulled out a snuff box, opened the lid, and extended his palm. Akbar took a pinch of the snuff. Birbal said with a smile: "When one offers snuff, his hand is below that of the other!"



Dances of India

Tabla on feet

*I*n the 16th century, Baaz Bahadur, the young and cultured ruler of Malwa, had to retreat to Mandu, a beautiful town in the Narmada valley, after losing a battle. There he married the beautiful Rajput princess Roopmati, after a long romance. He might have thought that they would live happily ever after. But it was not to be. Emperor Akbar at Agra heard reports of Roopmati's beauty and sent an army to take the famous fort at Mandu and bring back the queen.

A terrible battle followed. Baaz Bahadur was routed, but he escaped. Queen Roopmati, who did not wish to be caught, killed herself. Although the victorious Mughal army could not take Roopmati to Akbar, they did take back something precious: the local dance tradition. History says that almost 350 dancers were taken to the Mughal court from Mandu and its neighbourhoods.

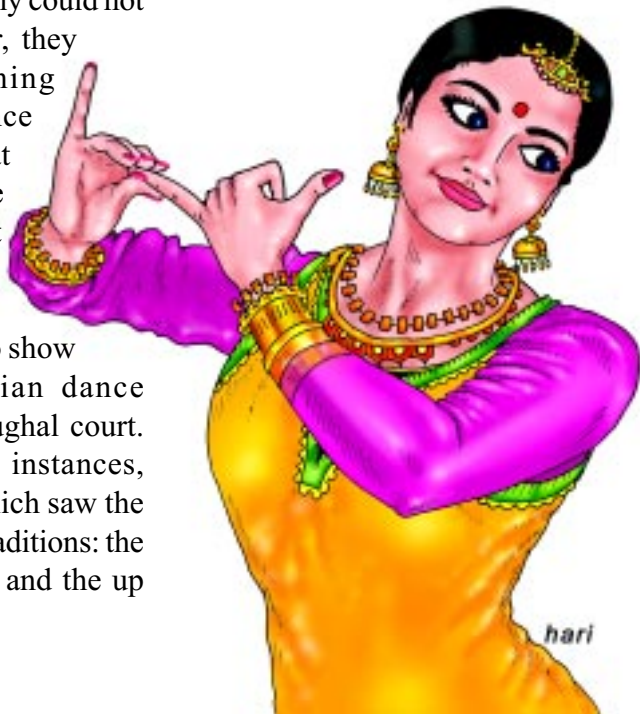
That is one instance to show how the existing Indian dance tradition reached the Mughal court. There were many such instances, happier than this one, which saw the meeting of two cultural traditions: the local Hindu art tradition and the up

and coming Muslim tradition. It was this meeting of two different cultures – the Hindu and the Muslim – that gave rise to the Kathak dance.

During the heydays of Akbar, there was much interaction between the Mughal and the Rajput courts. This rapidly led to the development of a distinct Indo-Mughal art tradition. Kathak was one such tradition.

Kathak marked the moving away of classical dance from the temples and into the courts and other secular places.

By the 18th century, Kathak had blossomed into a dance tradition in its own right. It developed techniques





and a grammar for itself, distinct from the other forms of dance.

Even as early as the 16th century, the kathak dancers wore tight *churidar pyjama*. The Mughal paintings show that even when the dancers wore full or long skirts, the *churidar* was visible below it. By the late 16th century, the dancers had begun using thick anklets called *nupur*, with many bells on them.

The important difference between kathak and the other dance styles is that while the others depend on *swara* and *raga*, the two aspects of music that govern melody, kathak alone depends largely on the *tala* or the rhythm structure of the music. This dance form is known for the complex movements and intricate rhythmic patterns of the feet.

The dance compositions draw their themes from mythology, especially Krishna Lila, set to Hindustani classical music. They are usually accompanied by the *sarangi* and the *tabla*.

The kathak was made popular and re-established by legendary dancers like Maharaj Bindadin and his brother Kalaka of Lucknow, and their descendants, Achan Maharaj and Lucchchu Maharaj. Others like Birju Maharaj and Sambhu Maharaj have also helped establish kathak as a dynamic dance form.

Kathak techniques

- ✧ It is common for a kathak dancer to lift one shoulder over the plane of the other. This technique is called the *kasakmasak*.
- ✧ The kathak dancers charm their audiences by their jumps and pirouettes. It is perhaps the only dance style in which the dancer lifts both feet up together and remains suspended in the air for some time. Kathak is also known for its pirouettes or *chakkars*, or the way the dancers whirl round and round. This usually marks the climax of the dance.
- ✧ Kathak is perhaps the only classical dance style where the dancer herself recites the *bols* or the rhythmic patterns that she displays by the strumming of her feet.

Makara Sankranthi

Tamil Nadu

Makara Sankranthi is a colourful festival that is celebrated widely in India in the month of January.

This day marks the onset of Uttarayana, when the northern hemisphere gets exposed to the sun. Traditionally, it is believed, the sun enters the house of Makara on this day.

It is believed that he who passes away during this period will be free from the cycle of birth and death. In the epic Mahabharata, the veteran warrior and patriarch, Bheeshma, was fatally injured in the Kurukshetra war between the Pandavas and the Kauravas. He had been granted a boon that he could choose the time of his death. Lying on a bed of arrows prepared by the Pandava hero, Arjuna, he waited for the Uttarayana period. He breathed his last only after the sun entered the house of Makara so that he would not be reborn.

Pongal is one of the most important festivals in the calendar of the Tamils. It is a harvest festival that is observed for four days, of which the main celebration is on the day of Makara Sankranthi.

The first day of the festival is called *Bhogi*. All over the countryside, houses are cleaned and old, unwanted articles are burnt in big bonfires early in the morning.

And then comes *Pongal*. In villages, farmers buy new earthen pots, wear new dresses, and partake



of feasts. On this day, newly harvested rice and fresh, seasonal vegetables are cooked. All over the countryside, entire villages or communities gather around to cook the new rice in big earthen pots.

In urban households, too, the tradition of cooking a sweet dish with rice and jaggery, called *chakkarai-pongal*, is followed.

All houses wear a festive and colourful look with large *rangoli* and *kolam* drawn in front of the thresholds and garlands of mango leaves adorning the doorways. Surya, the sun god, is then worshipped.

The next day of the festival is *Mattu Pongal*, when cows and bullocks are feted for their contribution to the welfare of man.

Cattle-owners give a bath to their animals, decorate their horns and neck with colours and little bells. They are offered specially prepared pongal on this day.

A traditional bullfight called *jallikattu* is the star attraction of this day in the rural parts of the State. Bull racing is also organised on this day.

The final day of the festival is called *Kaanum Pongal*, when whole families go out on picnics or visit their near and dear ones. In some districts, it is celebrated as *Kanni Pongal*. Groups of young girls dressed in traditional finery perform *kolattam* and *kummi*, which are customary dances, in front of houses. The residents then reward them with money and sugarcane.

Andhra Pradesh

SSmoke and fog and cold, breezy dawns mark the beginning of the harvest festival in Andhra Pradesh. The festival begins with *bhogi*, a day before Makara Sankranthi, just as in Tamil Nadu.

On *bhogi*, houses are white washed, cleaned, and decorated. A bonfire is lit early in the morning and people sit around it, singing.

Makara Sankranthi is called *Pedda Panduga* or the big festival. On this day, farmers throw a feast to the farm-
Chandamama





hands and servants who help in cultivation.

The third day is called *Kanumu*. This is a day for resting and feasting. A variety of races, sports, and ram, bull and cock-fights are organised all over

the state to mark the occasion.

In some parts of Andhra Pradesh, the festival ends with the celebration of *Mukkanumu*, when bulls and cows are worshipped, fed, and taken out in processions.

Assam

The occasion of Makara Sankranti in Assam is filled with fun, frolic, and feasting. Here it is called *Magh Bihu* or *Bhogali Bihu*. The word *bhog* means eating or enjoyment.

On *Uruka*, the eve of the festival, and the last day of the month of *Pausa*, the men prepare a makeshift cottage on the field that lie barren after the harvest. This makeshift cottage is

called *bhelaghar*. A *meji* is an essential part of the celebrations. This is a platform made of logs of firewood piled one on top of the other. The firewood is enclosed by bamboo on four sides.

The women make rice-cakes and other eatables. They spend the whole night merry-making around the *meji*. When dawn breaks, they take a ritual bath and offer prayers.





Elsewhere

Makara Sankranthi is also celebrated with religious fervour and gaiety in other parts of India. In Punjab it is celebrated as *Lohri*, which is also a rural festival to mark the new harvest. Men and women perform the popular folk dance called *bhangra* in their traditional attire around a bonfire in the village square. Women apply henna or *mehendi* paste in gorgeous designs on their palms and feet on this occasion.

In West Bengal, on Makara Sankranthi day, pilgrims from all over the country congregate at the Ganga Sagar islands where river Ganga meets the Bay of Bengal. A religious fair known as the *Ganga Sagar Mela* is an important feature of the celebrations. It is believed that a dip at the confluence cleanses one of all impurities.



In Karnataka, too, the harvest festival is celebrated with pomp. Bulls and cows are decorated and taken in procession. Men and women dressed in new clothes greet each other with sugarcane, dry coconut, and fried grams. Kite-flying is a popular traditional sport held on this occasion.

The skyline in Gujarat, too, is peppered with colourful kites on Sankranthi. Gujaratis consider Sankranthi an auspicious day and award scholarships and prizes to students.

In Kerala, the annual pilgrimage season at Sabarimala, the abode of Lord Ayyappa, comes to an end on Makara Sankranthi day, when the “Makara Jyothi” – a divine glow – appears on the horizon far away among the mountains.

Makara Sankranthi means different things to different people all over India. But there is, as usual, a common thread running through the various celebrations that mark the occasion. If Diwali is the festival of lights, Sankranthi is the harvest festival, an occasion to welcome the new harvest and pray for more days of plenty and prosperity.

A Folk tale from Tamil Nadu

What do you think of when you mention Tamil Nadu: crisp Kanchipuram silk saris, *idli-dosas*, Carnatic music, Bharatanatyam, and temples. A kingdom has been known to have existed in Tamil Nadu even before the birth of Christ. Tamil is also one of the oldest languages in use in India today.

The State of Tamil Nadu is bounded by Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh in the north, and Kerala in the west. The Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean are its eastern and southern boundaries. The southernmost tip of Tamil Nadu is Cape Comorin or Kanyakumari – where the landmass of India tapers off into the surrounding waters.

The eastern and western ghats meet in Tamil Nadu, and Ooty, Kodaikanal, Yercaud, and Kothagiri – all of Tamil Nadu's popular hill stations — lie in this region.

With an area of 130,058 sq km and population of 62,110,839, Tamil Nadu is the 11th largest State in India.

Buttermilk and Old Rice

Murugan and his wife, Selvi, lived in Puliampatti, a village deep in the southern regions of Tamil Nadu. Murugan was a poor man and had neither land nor work to make a living. Selvi found it very difficult to cook and keep house. One day, when she felt she could not stand it another moment, she told him: "If you don't find some way of earning money soon, I'll go back to my mother's place." She then strained



out some rice left over from last night's dinner, that she had soaked in water. She blended salty *neer moru* with it and put in a few *pacchai molagai* to spice it up. This she packed and handed to her husband.

"Now go to the city and find some work. Don't come back until you've something of value to show me. I've given you the last grain of rice we had," said Selvi.

So Murugan trudged towards the city feeling very sorry for himself. The day was hot and humid. After about an hour, he came to a large and shady tamarind tree.

'I'll rest awhile under this *puliya maram*,' he thought. 'Then around midday I shall eat the *pazhaya soru* that Selvi has packed for me.' He tied up his precious bundle of *pazhaya soru* on a branch to keep it safe from stray animals, and fell fast asleep.

Now an old *brahmarakshasan* lived in that *puliya maram* – it is said that every large *puliya maram* has one living in it. The *brahmarakshasan* wondered what was in the bundle that Murugan had so carefully tied up. As is the nature of these beings, he could not rest until his curiosity was satisfied. So, he reached out for the bundle and opened it. As soon as he did that, he took a deep breath.

'*Enna arpudhamana vasanai!* What could this food be? I haven't smelt



anything like it,' he told himself. Then, before he could stop himself, he had taken a handful of *soru* with a bite of *pacchai molagai*. It was so tasty that he took another and another. Before he knew it, he had eaten it all up.

Then he felt guilty. "The poor man, what would he eat now when he gets up feeling hungry?" thought the *rakshasan*. So, he wrapped a magic bronze bowl in the cloth that had contained the parcel of *pazhaya soru*. 'This *vengalappanai* will do you good!' he muttered to the snoring Murugan.

Some time later Murugan got up, refreshed and ravenous. He eagerly looked forward to his meal of *molagai* and *pazhaya soru*, and was most upset when he found it all gone. In its place was the gleaming *vengalappanai* but,



Festivals and fairs

Pongal celebrates the reaping of the harvest and is one of the most important festivals. It is celebrated for four days in the month of January. *Jallikattu* or bullfights are organised in every village and town as part of the celebration.

Chithirai vizha is celebrated in April in the city of Madurai. A highlight of this festival is the re-enactment of the mythical wedding of Lord Sundareswar (Siva) with the Pandyan princess, Meenakshi.

The cultural festivals organised here include the dance festivals at Chidambaram and Mamallapuram. The country's best classical dancers can be seen in action at Mamallapuram or Mahabalipuram during this festival. An open-air stage is set in front of the monolithic rock sculptures built by the Pallava kings in the 13th century on the beachfront.

The dance festival at Chidambaram is held at the temple dedicated to Lord Nataraja, the cosmic dancer. The temple has pillars with carvings that depict the 108 dance poses of Bharatanatyam, the classical dance of Tamil Nadu.

of course, he did not know that it was a magic pot. He hit out at the *panai* in anger and frustration, and it made a ringing sound. At once a *devathai* emerged and set a fantastic meal in front of him on a dew fresh *vazhai ilai*. Murugan was amazed, but he was so hungry that he did not waste time in asking questions (and anyway, there was no one around to answer him!) but ate his fill.

When he had finished, everything

was cleaned up in a trice and the *panai* stood there as though nothing had happened! Except that now he felt full and satisfied as he hadn't in a long while. Murugan quickly picked up the bowl before it could disappear, and rushed back home.

Selvi was not at all happy to see him. She knew he could not have made his fortune in a single day and so opened her mouth to scream at him. "*Vaaya mudu!*" Murugan shouted with such



than with the hope of enjoying a sumptuous lunch. Imagine their surprise when they saw Murugan's hut all decked up and ready for the feast. Murugan and Selvi stood in front of the house and greeted everyone with folded hands: "*Vaanga vaanga*". Gorgeous looking *devathais* were bustling all over the place laying *vazhai ilai* in rows and filling bright stainless steel tumblers with water. As soon as the guests sat down, they were served steaming hot, delicious food: spicy *masala vadais*, *appalam*, yummy *paal payasam*, steaming hot

terocity that she just stood there with her mouth open. Then he placed the bowl in the middle of their hut. Next he knocked on the *vengalappanai* and called out to the *devathai* to give them a meal. At once the *devathai* came out. As before, two fresh green *vazhai ilai* were laid out and the couple was served a delicious meal.

Then Murugan told his wife how the *panai* had been left in place of the *pazhaya soru* she had given him. They decided that since it was a gift from the gods, they should feed all the poor people in the village every day. "Let's throw a *virundu* for all the villagers!" said Selvi.

The next day Murugan and Selvi knocked on every door in the village and invited the people to a feast. The villagers knew how poorly the couple fared and came to the feast, more out of curiosity Chandamama

Handicrafts

Tamil Nadu is noted all over the world for its famous silk saris. These are woven at Kanchipuram from pure mulberry silk. These saris in brilliant colours have an enviable reputation for texture, lustre, durability, and finish. The saris are embellished with fine gold thread (*zari*) work. The silk industry of Kanchipuram is said to be more than 400 years old.





sambhar, four varieties of vegetables, *aviyal*.....

No wonder, the feast became the talk of the village.

The rich moneylender of Puliyaampatti had not joined the feast and was eaten up with curiosity and jealousy. One day, he went to Murugan's house and wormed the secret out of him. Then he decided that he must get one such *panai* for himself. He had his wife cook a lavish meal and pack it in a huge many-layered tiffin-carrier. Then off he went to the tree where the *brahmarakshasan* lived.

Very soon, he felt drowsy. "Where's that stupid *brahmarakshasan*? Why doesn't he come soon?" he shouted loudly and the *brahmarakshasan* heard

Temples

Tamil Nadu is famous for its temples. The Brihadeswara Temple or the Big Temple at Thanjavur is known for its architecture. It was built by Raja Raja Chola I (A.D 985-1013). The *vimanam* (the tower over the *sanctum*) has been sculpted out of a monolithic block of granite and placed such that its shadow never falls on the ground.

The Meenakshi-Sundareswarar Temple at Madurai is another tourist attraction. It is dedicated to Goddess Meenakshi and Lord Siva.

The Ekambareswarar Temple at Kanchipuram is dedicated to Lord Siva who is worshipped here as Prithvi or



Earth, one of the five elements.

Among the other temples of the State are the Sriranganathar Temple at Srirangam, and the temples in and around Kumbakonam, Rameswaram, Chidambaram, Palani and Kanyakumari.

him. He decided to teach the man a lesson. Soon the moneylender fell asleep. The *brahmarakshasan* removed the tiffin carrier and put a cane basket in its place. 'This *moongil koodai* will take care of you!' he thought.

The moneylender woke up and looked hopefully around him. He wondered a bit when he saw the basket, but thought to himself that maybe as he had brought such a sumptuous meal for the *brahmarakshasan*, this basket must in some way be even better than the *paanai* that Murugan got. He returned home, excited.

The next day he invited all his friends to a feast. When everyone had assembled, in a voice ringing with confidence, he asked the basket for food to be served to his guests. But to his dismay, four huge men emerged



Glossary

Neer moru: watery buttermilk

Pacchai molagai: green chilli

Puliya maram: tamarind tree

Pazhaya soru: leftover rice

Enna arpudamana vasanai:
what a delicious aroma!

Vengalappanai: bronze pot

Panai: pot

Devathai: celestial being

Vazhai ilai: banana leaf

Vaaya mudu: shut up

Virundu: feast

Vanga vanga: you are welcome

Moongil koodai: bamboo
basket

Mottai adichuduche: he has
shaven my head. (In Tamil, the
phrase also means stripping one of
his fame and fortune!)

from the basket. They had big moustaches that curled alarmingly and muscles that bulged even more alarmingly. They caught hold of the rich man and his guests and shaved everyone's head off cleanly and sent them home hungry.

"Ayyo! *Mottai adichuduche*!" wailed the poor moneylender.

This 'feast' too became the talk of the village and the rich man had to go on a long pilgrimage to get over the shame!

Know Your India

Quiz

Yet another Republic Day - the 51st to be exact - will come off on January 26, 2002. It commemorates the day India was declared an independent sovereign socialist republic. This came about after years of struggle to secure freedom from the foreign rulers. This month's quiz recalls the fight for independence from different angles. Those who have followed our feature "India in the 20th Century" from January-April last year will have most of the answers on their finger-tips.

1. Who is the author of the book *"The Indian Struggle"*?
 2. Who coined the word 'satyagraha' first?
 3. Where and when did Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru meet Gandhiji for the first time?
 4. Three national leaders were familiarly called Lal, Bal, and Pal. Who were they?
 5. When was Bengal divided into Bengal and East Bengal?
 6. When did the East India Company hand over power to the British Government?
 7. Where and when did the Indian National Congress adopt the resolution for freedom for India?
 8. When did the Simon Commission come to India? What was its objective?
 9. When was the Interim Government formed?
 10. "Freedom is my birthright, and I shall have it!" Who made this famous statement?
- (Answers next month)*

Answers to December Quiz

1. May 11, 2000. The baby was named Astha.
2. Kanchenjunga-8,598 m/20,208 ft.
3. Sindhu and its tributaries-Jhelum, Chenab, Rabi, and Sutlej
4. Uttaranchal-DehraDun, Chattisgarh-Raipur, Jharkhand-Ranchi.
5. Tamil Nadu - Mrs.Janaki Ramachandran and Miss J.Jayalalithaa.

Saga of India

Glimpses of a great civilisation –
its glorious quest for Truth through the ages

24. The Magic Lure of Kalidasa



“Grandpa,” Sandip called out with some excitement as he returned from his school, “we’re going to stage a play by Kalidasa, on the occasion of our annual day. We’ve been asked to report at the auditorium tomorrow. It’s Sunday, though. Probably our teachers would allot roles to us.”

“Is it *Abhijnana Shakuntalam*?” asked Professor Devnath.

“Right, Grandpa, but how did you guess?”

“There’s hardly any credit in it, my dear boy, for that is the most popular of Chandamama

Kalidasa’s plays. The other two, *Vikramorvashiyam* and *Malavikag-nimitra*, are not so easy to be presented on stage, and much of their beauty would disappear when they’re enacted in any language other than Sanskrit. Are you, by any chance, doing the play in the original Sanskrit?”

“Oh no...”

“Why are you so scared at the prospect of presenting it in Sanskrit?”

“It’s so difficult!”

“That’s an outdated idea, my child; it appears difficult because of the



difficult method followed by the teachers to teach it. New methods have come into vogue. The joy Sanskrit can give you is unparalleled. But that's a different matter. What role are you going to play?"

"I don't know, Grandpa, it will be decided tomorrow. Would you mind telling me the story in brief? That should help me to decide..."

"What's there to decide? There must be a jester or a clown in the play, and that is the role reserved for you!" cut in Chameli. She had just then come back from school.

"You know the story, is that so? Very well, you need not again hear it from Grandpa. Please go away. Let me hear

it from him all alone," Sandip shouted at his younger sister.

"May I suggest that both of you go, change your school uniform, eat your refreshments, and come back?" intervened their mother, Jayashree. "There were some visitors for your grandfather and he must be tired talking to them. He should now relax."

"I second the proposal," said the professor.

Both the children ran away with their school bags, only to be back in half-an-hour.

Professor Devnath, eyes shut, had meanwhile recollected the story.

"Baba, are you sure you're not tired?" queried Jayashree.

"Never mind," the kind veteran avoided answering the question. "Talking to them should itself prove a relaxation."

And he went on with his narration:

The story begins on an amusing note. King Dushyanta of Hastinapur is on a hunting spree. Chasing a deer, he comes close to the hermitage of Sage Kanva. It so happens that Shakuntala, the beautiful daughter of Sage Visvamitra and the nymph Menaka, adopted by Kanva, is being troubled by a stubborn bee. Her companion, a witty girl, wonders how anyone can harass a damsel when King Dushyanta is ruling the country!



Lo and behold, there is Dushyanta himself ready to save the damsel in distress!

Kanva is away. It is, therefore, for his daughter to take care of the royal guest. The king stays on in the Ashram as he needs rest. He has been busy driving away wild beasts and a horde of demons from the area. Before long Shakuntala and Dushyanta set their hearts on each other and are married in a simple way.

The king returns to his capital, after making a gift of his most precious ring to Shakuntala. He decides that he should not take her away with him when Kanva is absent.

One day as Shakuntala sits brooding over Dushyanta, there arrives

the short-tempered sage Durvasa. As Shakuntala, engrossed in her thoughts, fails to respond to his calls, he curses her, saying that the one of whom she sits enamoured would even fail to recognize her!

Shakuntala does not hear the curse, but one of her friends does. She implores the sage and he modifies his curse, saying its effect would one day fade away.

On his return, Kanva is happy to learn that his daughter has chosen King Dushyanta for her husband. Shakuntala is soon going to be a mother. The sage sends her to her husband.

Alas, under the effect of the curse, the king fails to recognize her and Shakuntala has lost the memento, the

ring, while crossing the river by boat when she was playfully running her fingers through the moving water.

Shakuntala's feeling of humiliation is deep. However, she is led away by her mother, the nymph Menaka. Shakuntala gives birth to a son in the forest.

One day, a fisherman finds a ring inside a fish. He is produced before the king. The sight of the ring at once brings memories of Shakuntala. The king is repentant. But where is Shakuntala? The king passes his days in sorrow thinking of the injustice he has meted out to her.

One day, on a visit to the hermitage of Sage Kashyapa, the king is fascinated by the sight of a little boy playing with lion-cubs. He is none other than his own son. Through him the king meets Shakuntala, whom he had

forgotten for some time. They are now happily reunited.

Their son Bharata was to become a great monarch after whom the country is believed to have got its name — Bharatavarsha.

Grandpa Devnath, after narrating the story, said in conclusion: "Do you know what a great German poet had to say? Here it is:

"Should you wish to enjoy the flowers of youth

And the fruits of age mature,

Should you wish to have something charming,

Something that has a magic lure,

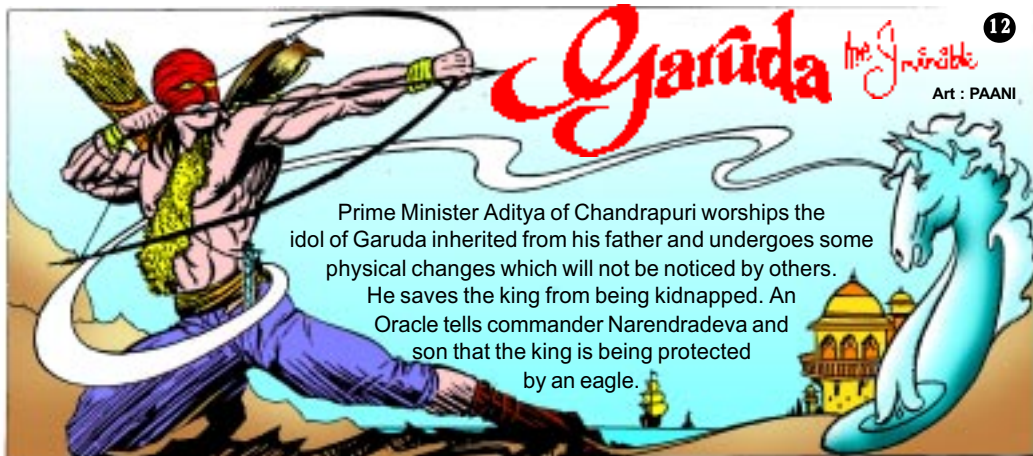
Should you wish to describe heaven and earth

By one word sole,

Read Shakuntala, I say: it'll satisfy this all!"

-Visvavasu

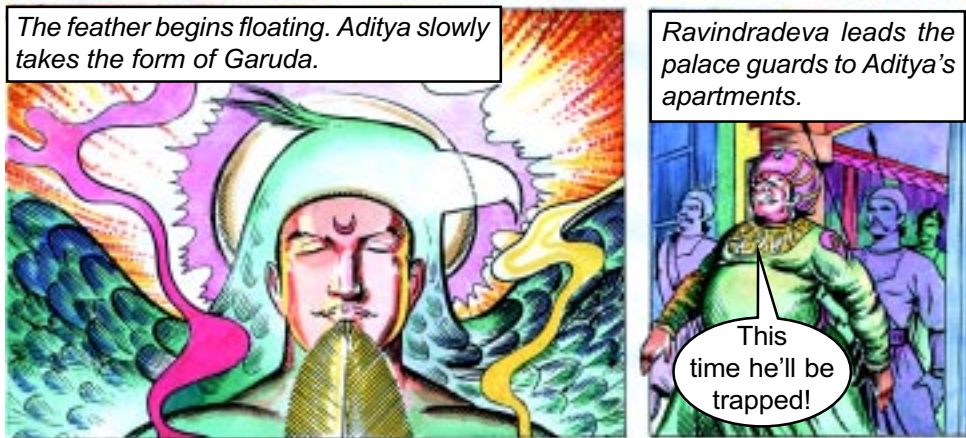
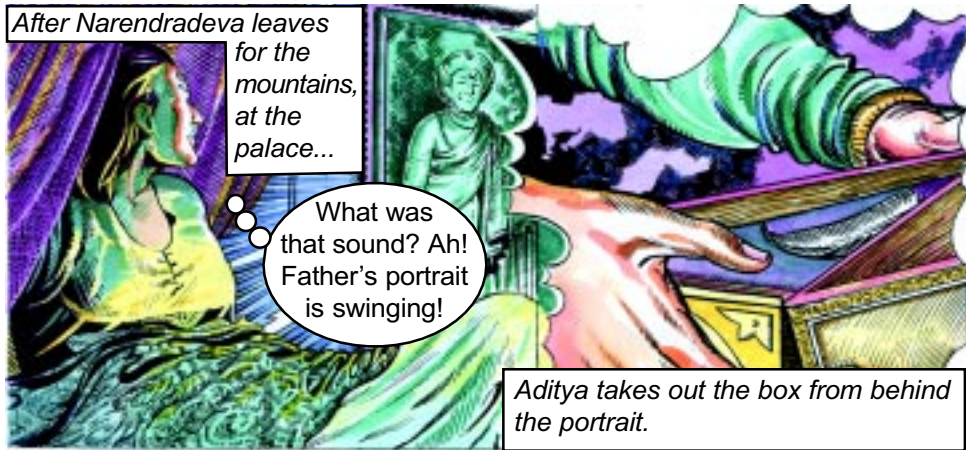






He lives alone, in the company of snakes. He calls himself Nagabandhu. He meets his disciples in a temple at the foothill during 'Shravan'.







R. Pavani Tushara of **Anakapalle, Andhra Pradesh**, writes:
I am an ardent fan of *Chandamama* (English). I have been reading the magazine for the past many years. And I observe a lot of improvement in it. The November issue is simply superb. The paintings by children are amazing. I would request you to bring in more adventure comics like *Samaritan Samir*.

Rizwan Jameel of **Gowlipura, Maharashtra**, writes:

I am an old reader of *Chandamama*. It has proved a useful guide to English. After reading the magazine regularly, I feel that my English has improved.

Bharat J. Bohra of **Nasik, Maharashtra**, has this to say: I have been reading your *Chandamama* for the last four months. I am nowadays able to tell my friends and relations a lot of interesting things. Some of my friends have become members of your magazine.

Though my son regularly reads *Chandamama*, I would like to claim it as “my magazine”, writes **Mr. P. C. Das, Headmaster, Athiabari**. “It is an esteemed and popular children’s magazine in Assam. We read the magazine in Assamese, English, Hindi, Bengali, and Sanskrit. The Assamese translation needs improvement. Your comics and stories are greatly appreciated. We wish more popularity and prosperity for the magazine.

This came from **Pooja Choubey** of **Visakhapatnam**:

I am an ardent reader of your magazine; I have been reading it for ten years now. It has been the secret of my topping the class everytime in English. It is a complete magazine for everybody.



According to **Jaysmita Sahu** of **Bhubaneswar**, *Chandamama* is a very loving, interesting, and informative magazine for people of all age groups. “I am a student, and I love to read *Chandamama* very much.”

Channamma was the first Indian queen to fight the English three decades before the 1857 Mutiny. She spent her last days in the Bailhongal fort.



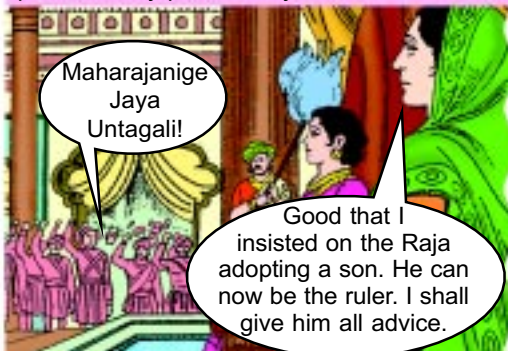
I might not live long to see my motherland free.

Channamma was the younger Rani of Raja Malla Surja of Kittur, a prosperous Karnataka kingdom. She and Rani Rudramma had a son each.



If Channamma wishes so, I shall accept him as the third prince of Kittur.

After the Raja's death, Rudramma's son ascended the throne. Channamma's son was to be his bodyguard. Unfortunately, both boys passed away prematurely.



Maharajanige Jaya Untagali!

Good that I insisted on the Raja adopting a son. He can now be the ruler. I shall give him all advice.

The East India Company had set its eyes on Kittur. The Company's Political Agent Thackeray sent for Channamma to his camp.



Captain, announce that the Company does not recognise the illegal heir. Say that the Company has taken over Kittur.

The queen refuses to come. She says Kittur will not obey the Company's orders.

Thackeray asked his soldiers to storm the fort. His hope that there would be no resistance was belied. Guns boomed, and two officers were killed.



Sir, go back! Ha! Ah!

Thackeray was taken aback. He regrouped his soldiers and himself led the attack. Channamma directed the operation from the ramparts of the fort.

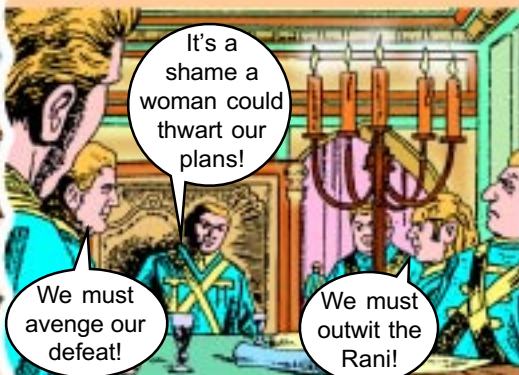


There! That's Thackeray! He should not escape!

Thackeray was fatally wounded. The English soldiers, now without a leader, surrendered.



The company held an urgent meeting and decided to attack Kittur again.



The Company sent a large army to march to Kittur. The Rani was asked to free the prisoners, with a promise of no further attacks.

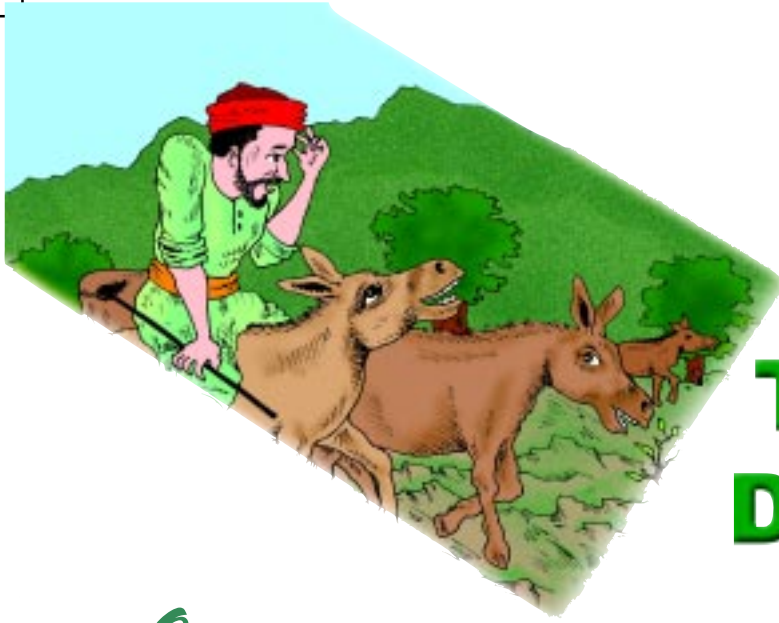
Channamma took the message as a word of honour. She thought she could avoid another attack on the fort.



Soon after the prisoners returned to the camp, the Company mounted an attack on the fort. The ammunition depot was destroyed. The fort fell.

It was a victory achieved through treachery. Channamma was taken prisoner. She was offered freedom if she accepted the company's right over Kittur.





The Tenth Donkey

One day Hodja Naseeruddin was coming back from the flour mill. He was bringing back the donkeys belonging to the people of Al Shekir. The donkeys were loaded with bags of freshly ground wheat. The hot sun beat down on the Hodja's turban and the dust swirled about his feet as they hung down the sides of the donkey he was riding. He hummed as he rode along, pleased with his day's work.

'I'll show them!' he thought as he looked at the long road in front of him. "Those people thought I couldn't do this simple job. I know all about looking after donkeys. I don't need the advice of those fools in the village on riding them or herding them.

He guided the donkeys along the road. His eyes wandered over the road as it disappeared behind a hill. Al Shekir was on the other side of the hill. He had to go around to the other

side of the hill to get to his village. As he guided the donkeys across the narrow bridge over the brook, he thought, 'They'll see now, those fools who made fun of me how well I've done. They'll know when I bring back the donkeys all safe and sound and not a scratch on them.'

Then he started counting the donkeys just to make sure he had them all there safe and sound. "One, two, three eight," he finished. Then gasped, 'Only eight? I'm sure there were nine when I left the mill. Where could the ninth one have gone?'

He got off his donkey and ran up and down the road, looking behind rocks and peeping under the bushes and trees. But he could not find any donkey that might have strayed.

Then, hot and tired, he counted the donkeys again worriedly. Now they were nine! He could not believe his

eyes or his counting because he was sure there had been only eight just a while ago. So he counted again and there were indeed nine. Heaving a big sigh of relief, he got on to the donkey he was riding and continued singing his way home happily.

After a while, he was passing through a wood. He felt he had to make sure that all his donkeys were present and safe. So once again he counted them. "One, two, three..." he counted up to eight. And look as hard as he might, he could not see the ninth. So he got off his donkey and ran here and there peeping behind bushes and peering over rocks but could see neither tail nor any hair of the missing donkey.

He came up to the donkeys and counted them again. Now there were nine! Perplexed, the Hodja stood scratching his head wondering what was happening. 'Surely, someone has bewitched them,' he muttered as he got on to his donkey.

Just then a friend came whistling down the road. The Hodja was delighted to see him.

"O, Ali," he greeted him in a relieved voice. "Am I glad to see you! I think I have lost a donkey or maybe I haven't. Can you tell me if I have or I haven't?"



"What do you mean by that? You have either lost one or you haven't," said his friend. He looked puzzled.

"Well it's like this," explained the Hodja. "When I count them sometimes there are nine and sometimes eight. I really don't know what has got into them."

"Hmm," said the friend. "Maybe you should count them again now, and I'll be able to make out what the problem is."

So he went over once again: "One, two, three.. eight," went the Hodja and then turned a face full of terror towards his friend. "See, surely they are bewitched! Where has the ninth one gone?"

But his friend was not listening to him. He was busy slapping his thighs in a laughing fit and was about to burst.

"Oh, Hodja!" he sputtered through his laughter. "When you counted your brothers, why didn't you count the brother on whom you're sitting?"

Who then was the tenth donkey?

The Three Knots



Once upon a time, in the distant land of Latvia lived a young boy. He was very fond of water. As a small boy, he had only to come out of the house than his mother would find him near the village pond throwing pebbles and twigs into it or in danger of falling in trying to pull out the things he had throw in. No matter how much his mother warned him or scolded him, he would somehow find his way to the pond. As he grew older he spent his time sailing paper boats and as he

grew a little older than that, he would take an old wooden tub and paddle around the pond.

Finally, his parents decided that since they could not do anything about his love for water, they might as well get him to become as good a sailor as he can be. So, they took him to an old seaman and asked him if he would teach him all about seacraft. After sometime, the seaman brought the boy back to his parents and told them that he had taught him all he knew

and the boy would make a fine seaman.

Then giving him a piece of rope with three knots on it, the seaman said: "You now know where the seas are and about the winds. But knowing that is not enough. You must know how to handle them. A sailor must have patience when there is no wind and it is calm. He must have the patience to wait for the wind to fill his sails. If there is a storm and the wind is angry, he must have courage and not lose heart. I've grown to look upon you as my own son, so I'm giving you this piece of rope as a gift. So long as you have it with you, you can sail the seas in any kind of weather. If there is a calm, undo the first knot and a fair wind will begin to blow. If you want a storm, undo the second knot. When you want the storm to stop, undo the third knot. Now good luck to you and may the winds be fair wherever you sail!"

And so it was.
The boy sailed in
all the seas and
his ship was
always blessed
with fair winds
and good
Chandamama

weather. So much so he was called the Lucky Skipper.

Once the Lucky Skipper was anchored near the capital city of the kingdom. It was a busy port and many ships were anchored there. However, when he decided to set sail, there was a great calm. Nothing stirred and there was not so much as a ripple in the sea. The ships could not do anything but wait. The captains and merchants cursed the weather and their luck, but there was not a thing that they could do. Most impatient of all was the prince of the land. He had been getting ready to sail to be married to a beautiful princess and was now worried. If he didn't go there in time, her father would find some other





groom for her. He first offered a big bag of gold to whoever would take him to his bride, and when no one came forward, the prince even offered his kingdom, for he felt he would rather not rule or live if he couldn't marry the princess.

The Lucky Skipper felt sorry for the unhappy prince and offered to take him to his bride. Then the Lucky Skipper set his sails and undid the first knot. A fair wind rose and swiftly took

the ship and the prince to their destination. The prince married the princess, who was her father's only child. He was so happy that he decided to stay there and rule that kingdom when her father died. He told the Lucky Skipper that he could have his kingdom as his reward.

The Lucky Skipper went back to visit the old king, give him news of his son, and see how things lay. There he got a glimpse of the princess, the king's daughter. As must happen in tales of this sort, he fell in love with her as she did with him. The king gave his consent and their marriage was announced. There seemed to be no problems at all and everything was set for a 'happy ever after' ending.

However, it wasn't to be that. The princess was, of course, very beautiful and had had many suitors before she set eyes on the Lucky Skipper. Now one of these was the son of an island king and he felt he was a worthier suitor than the mere captain of a ship, and was furious that the princess did not see things his way. So, at dead of night, he and his men kidnapped the princess and took her away to the island kingdom. The king, her father, and the Lucky Skipper, as you can imagine, were most upset. But while the king wrung his hands and went pale with grief, the Lucky Skipper set

all his sails and went off to rescue the princess from the island kingdom.

When he reached the kingdom, he found that the island was surrounded by rocks and reefs that could cut the hull of a ship into ribbons and he did not know the way through them. So he anchored some distance away and thought he would bide his time. But the moment he anchored, the island's ships, bristling with cannons and guns, bore down upon him. The Lucky Skipper knew what he had to do. He took the piece of rope the seaman had given him and undid the second knot. At once a fierce storm was unleashed, the kind of which the islanders had never seen in their life. Even the Lucky Skipper's ship that was anchored firmly shook and swayed dreadfully. After the storm had gone on for a while and all of the island's ships and boats had sunk without a trace, the Lucky Skipper undid the third knot. Then the storm subsided and the sun shone serenely on a calm, blue sea.

The Lucky Skipper
Chandamama

slowly worked his way around the rocks and entered the harbour. He found the princess and brought her back to her father. The happy king arranged a grand wedding for the happy couple. Everyone enjoyed themselves so much that to this day they talk about the feast and the merrymaking.

And what happened to the rope? Well the Lucky Skipper had a son who took to water just like his father and he loved throwing things into the sea from his father's ship. One day he threw the rope into the sea and that was the end of that.





★ **What is the Ark of the Covenant?**

-Jyotiranjana Biswal, Durgapur

It is the name given to the wooden coffer or chest in which the Tablets of the Law as given to Moses (Ten Commandments) are believed to have been kept.

★ **What are KW and MW mentioned along with figures in respect of horsepower?**

- K. V. Rajagopal, Cochin

KW is kilowatts and MW is megawatts. Power of any kind is measured in watts, which can mean power produced by an engine or the power needed to work an engine. A kilowatt is 1,000 watts and a megawatt is 1,000,000 watts. Incidentally, the expression is derived from James Watt, the British engineer, who developed the steam engine in the 1760s.

★ **What is a ‘green paper’?**

-Prabhadevi, Kolhapur

A ‘green paper’ is a publication by the government setting out various aspects of a matter on which it contemplates legislation, inviting comments and suggestions from the public. This is followed by a ‘white paper’, giving the actual details of the proposed legislation.

★ **What is an epicentre?**

-C. Y. Nageswara Rao, Hyderabad

The point of origin of an earthquake inside the earth is called the focus; the point on the surface directly above it is the epicentre. Severe earthquakes usually have a shallow focus. They occur within 60 km of the surface.

This may interest you!

Anyone jumping on the surface of the moon would leap six times as high as he could on earth, because the moon has only one-sixth gravity of earth; the person would jump a height of 30ft.

When red is not a bright colour!

❁ Reader **Itishree Biswal** of Durgapur asks: What is meant by the idiom “to paint the town red”?

When a group of friends wish to celebrate something — like a posting on promotion, achievement of success in business, etc, — they go out and have a good time in a lively way, probably by indulging in drinking. But if they were to break out in a boisterous spree, by hopping into one bar or a pub after another, they can said to be out to paint the town red!

❁ What is the meaning of the idiom “to mind one’s p’s and q’s”? asks reader **N. Gopal Singh** of Cuddapah.

When someone is cautioned to mind his p’s and q’s, he is only being asked to be careful about his behaviour, not to say anything impolite. In good old days, the compositor in a printing press would be holding a brass ‘stick’ on his left hand and with his right picking up lead types from a ‘chase’ full of compartments for the alphabet — both capitals and small letters — and punctuation marks. The compartments for ‘p’ and ‘q’ being next to each other, the compositor often picked up the wrong type, and the composed word or sentence would go awry. Two words which were often mis-spelt in those days were MARTIAL and MARITAL. When you read printed text, you can look out for such words and find how the sentence has turned out to be funny, or not so funny.

❁ Reader **Ravindra Kumar** of Kochi asks: What is the meaning of the word ‘highbrow’? Is ‘lowbrow’ its opposite?

The word highbrow denotes that the book or discussion under reference deals with a serious topic in an intellectual way, not easily understood. The expression indicates disapproval or disappointment. We often hear of people commenting: “It went above my head!” Naturally, lowbrow means something simple and easy to understand. Like, lowbrow course (of study) or lowbrow entertainment.



*Click
a caption*

PHOTO CAPTION CONTEST



Can you formulate a caption in a few words, to suit these pictures related to each other?

You may write it on a post card and mail it to:

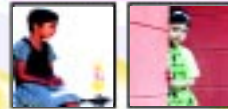
**Photo Caption Contest, CHANDAMAMA
(at the address given below)**

to reach us before the 20th of the current month. A reward of Rs. 100/- will go to the best entry which will be published in the issue after the next.

Congratulations

The Prize for the November 2001
contest goes to
MISS Kuhu ATAL
c/o Atal Nursing Home
21, Mundra Colony
Ujjain 456001
Madhya Pradesh


The winning entry



**"Playing with a doll"
"Waiting for a pal"**

CHANDAMAMA ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

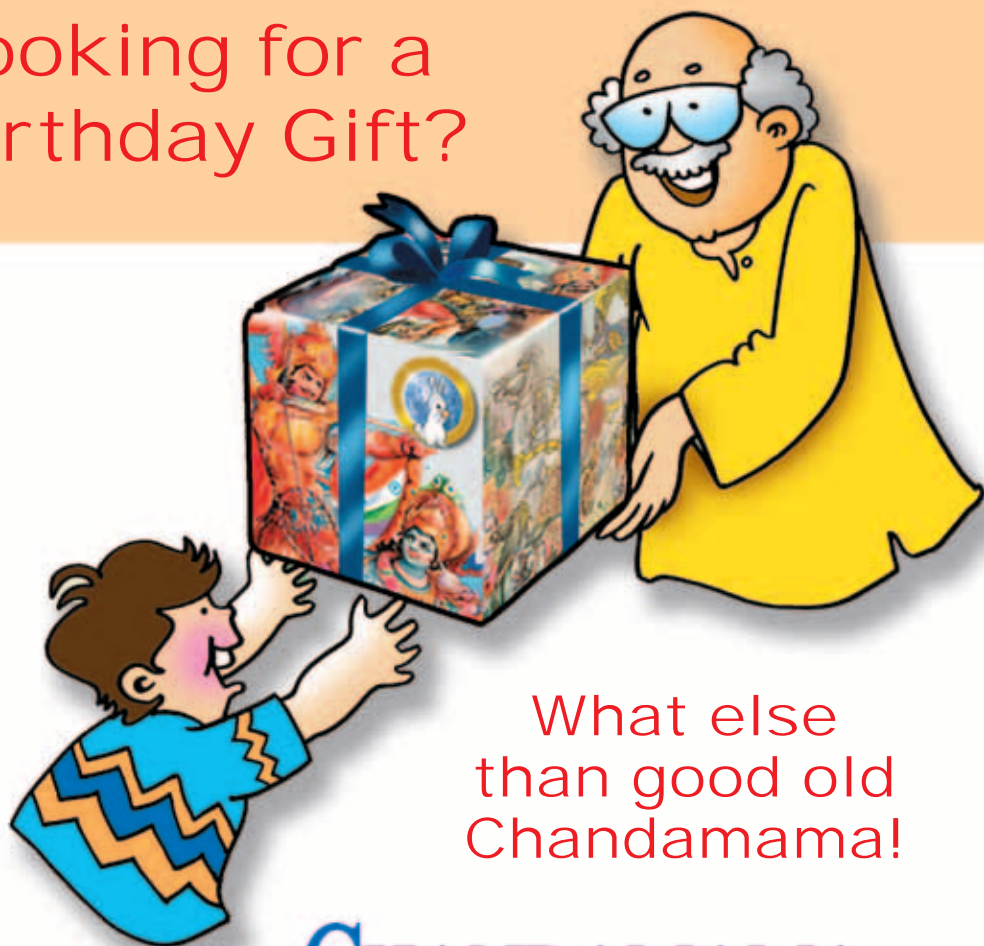
Within India Rs. 120/- by surface mail

Payment in favour of CHANDAMAMA INDIA LIMITED

No. 82, Defence Officers Colony, Ekkatuthangal, Chennai - 600 097

Printed and Published by B. Viswanatha Reddi at B.N.K. Press Pvt. Ltd., Chennai - 600 026 on behalf of Chandamama India Limited, No. 82, Defence Officers Colony, Ekkatuthangal, Chennai - 600 097. Editor : Viswam

Looking for a Birthday Gift?



CHANDAMAMA

An ideal growth scheme for the Indian child

Gift an annual subscription of Chandamama,
India's oldest and best-loved children's magazine.

Available in 12 languages.

For subscription details, please see facing page.



nutrine
wishes
**Happy & Prosperous
New Year
2002**

Free!*

one
Fun
With Facts
book



* Send 20 wrappers of Nutrine Koka Naka
to Nutrine Confectionery Co. P. Ltd.,
P.O.Box No. : 38, B.V.Reddy Colony, Chittoor - 517 001
and get one Fun With Facts book Free!



India's largest selling sweets and toffees.